

# SIGN ON LETTER TO AMEND BALLOT LANGUAGE for Proposition A known as the San Antonio Justice Charter

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Dear City Council and Mayor,

We, as representatives of the San Antonio community, have signed this letter to ask that the City Council of San Antonio amend the currently proposed ballot language for Proposition A, also known as the San Antonio Justice Charter, so that it may be more accessible and less burdensome to San Antonio voters in the May 6th, 2023 election.

## Reasons for Amendment:

1. The language is too long and burdensome for San Antonio voters.
  - a. The [Bexar County Elections Department counted](#) that there are currently 1,231,619 residents registered to vote. An estimated 754,000 are Latinos. Many of these folks are Spanish speakers.
  - b. Accurate translation of this proposed complex language for the many Spanish speaking voters in San Antonio will be difficult to do and may not translate accurately. The longer and more complex the language is, the harder the translation into other languages. This also applies to the many languages required to be translated on ballots by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act.
    - i. [Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act](#) requires accessibility of ballot language for “language minority voters”
    - ii. According to the [United States Department of Justice](#): “Care should be taken to provide an accurate translation that meets the needs of the minority community. Poor translations can be misleading for voters and embarrassing for local officials. Beyond quality control, there can be significant differences in dialect within a given language group, and it is the responsibility of local officials to provide a translation that local voters actually can use.”
  - c. According to this 2017 [TPR story](#): 1 in 4 San Antonio adults read at or below 5th grade reading level
  - d. This was further confirmed in 2021 by [the San Antonio Public Library](#): “The city of San Antonio has one of the lowest literacy rates in the nation. About 25% of adults living here are “functionally illiterate.”
2. State law allows the City to have a short and concise ballot description. The City’s legal obligation is only to name the “chief features” of the policy or to “describe its character and purpose.” [Dacus v. Parker](#), 466 S.W.3d 820, 825 (Tex. 2015).

- a. Therefore much of this proposed language is unnecessary as it goes beyond the chief features of the policy, and its character and purpose are already described in a succinct manner in the beginning of the proposed language

To assist our city leadership in creating more accessible ballot language to the voters of San Antonio, we have included the Ballot description with proposed changes:

## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO PROPOSITION A

Shall the City Charter be amended to include a justice policy under which the City of San Antonio will “use its available resources and authority to accomplish three goals of paramount importance: first, to reduce the city’s contribution to mass incarceration; second, to mitigate racially discriminatory law enforcement practices; and third, to save scarce public resources for greater public needs” and to “reduce unnecessary arrests and save scarce public resources through a comprehensive set of reforms”, including: ending enforcement of low-level marijuana possession by prohibiting police officers from issuing citations or make arrests for Class A or Class B misdemeanor possession of marijuana offenses, except in limited circumstances; prohibiting the enforcement of abortion crimes to promote the reproductive health, safety, and privacy of all City residents and stating that police officers shall not investigate, make arrests, or otherwise enforce any alleged criminal abortion, except in limited circumstances; banning no-knock warrants by stating that police officers shall not obtain a “no-knock” search warrant, nor shall they participate in serving a “no-knock” search warrant with other law enforcement agencies and creating additional policies concerning the issuing of warrants; banning chokeholds with no exceptions; requiring police officers to issue citations instead of making arrests for low-level nonviolent crimes **as authorized under article 14.06 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure**~~defined as Possession of Controlled Substance less than 4 oz, Penalty Group 2-A (synthetic cannabinoids), Class A or B misdemeanor under Texas Health and Safety Code §§ 481.1161(b)(1) & (2), Driving while License Invalid, Class A or B misdemeanor under Texas Transportation Code § 521.457, Theft of Property less than \$750, Class B misdemeanor under Texas Penal Code § 31.03(e)(2)(A), Theft of Service less than \$750, Class B misdemeanor under Texas Penal Code § 31.04(e)(2), Contraband in a Correctional Facility, Class B misdemeanor under Texas Penal Code § 38.114(c), Graffiti, with damage less than \$2500, Class A or B misdemeanor under Texas Penal Code § 28.08(b)(2) & (3), Criminal Mischief with damage less than \$750, Class B misdemeanor under Texas Penal Code § 28.03(b)(2), and all Class C misdemeanors, except Class C Public Intoxication, which shall be addressed in accordance with Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Section 14.034~~; and requiring the San Antonio City Council to appoint and provide resources to a Justice Director,~~with no previous experience in law enforcement~~, who will be charged with fulfilling the justice policy ~~by providing a justice impact statement before any City Council vote affecting the justice policy and meeting quarterly with community stakeholders to discuss the development of policies, procedures and practices related to the justice policy in open meetings~~

We urge our city leadership to think of the diversity of voters in each of their districts and to consider this when deciding language on the ballot for the May 6, 2023 San Antonio municipal elections.

Signed,

ACT 4 SA, Texas Organizing Project, SA Stands, San Antonio DSA, San Antonio AFL-CIO, Ground Game Texas, MOVE Texas, Party for Socialism and Liberation SATX, Black Freedom Factory, Texas Rising, All of Us or None Texas, FREED Texas, San Antonio Coalition for Police Accountability

