

LET THE PEOPLE VOTE!



MAYOR
GINA ORTIZ JONES



DISTRICT 2
JALEN MCKEE-RODRIGUEZ



DISTRICT 4
EDWARD MUNGIA



DISTRICT 5
TERI CASTILLO



DISTRICT 6
RIC GALVAN

By Maria A. Berriozabal, August 17, FB post.

Editor's note: On Monday, August 17, SA City Council rejected calls to hold a public vote in November on its \$489 million Spurs arena contribution. María Berriozabal posted the following after the vote:

I want to thank in a most sincere way the following who courageously voted to let the people vote on the Spurs arena. Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones, Councilwoman Teri Castillo, Councilmen Jalen McKee Rodriguez, Ric Galvan and Edward Mungia.

Now a story you inspired: Today as I was watching the special City Council meeting on San Antonians voting on the Spurs arena, I was reminded of a dear friend who was a radio announcer on *KCOR*, the Spanish language station. Mateo Camargo, a beloved figure, went to all places where public meetings were held. He would record various individuals and shared the news with his radio audience. Mateo would from time to time tell me that he was happy we had changed to single member districts. He would say that when the *Good Government League (GGL)* was still in power he stopped going to City Council meetings because all he heard was “aye, aye, aye.” Everyone voted yes and there were no news because there was no discussion. No debate. No trust.

Today I appreciated that in San Antonio people still pack the Chamber to have their voices heard. But there was another memory that was not so positive. It was of the divisions and the lack of trust in government that the *GGL* bred. It was our discontent in being left out and our voices not mattering. It was knowing that most of the at-large Council members and Mayor did not mirror the population of our city, lived in the fledgling Northside suburbs and even lived in close proximity to each other. We were a divided city.

Today we are divided again in stark ways.

The vote taken today mirrored those days 50 years ago where there was discontent and frustration. Today some of the speakers represented *Chambers of Commerce* and the business sector. They did not want a vote. Others spoke about their's and their community's needs, feeling left out and that their issues were not being heard. They supported an election. Some even felt their vote was being suppressed.

The Mayor said this vote was pivotal and I agree. We saw the division in our city—a poor city. With the exception of the deep Southside representative, those voting YES represented one side of our city. The parts with the greatest needs. The others represent the more affluent areas. That is what it means to be one of the major US cities to have serious economic segregation.

It would be a great thing if leaders who show up and speak (they are all leaders in their communities) gathered to discuss how we can address poverty and have businesses like the Spurs who are beloved by everyone to be the glue that inspired that discussion.

Absent that wish of mine, I am ending my day with hope. Hope because this particular issue has created an energetic, passionate and more engaged citizenry. Now there are more questions because of the recent debate. There are various organizing efforts that just got a boost. More people now know more about the Spurs arena issue. There is more dissection of *Project Marvel*. There is planning on both sides on the bond election in the near future.

My greatest hope stems from the fact that today there were actually **FIVE** Councilmembers who left the comfort zone and voted to let the people vote. In the past on such a major project there would be **THREE** members to go against the Established Order. At times there was only **ONE**—Me.

There are times when the long view has a lesson for us. Let's find good ones and hope.