

**Black American Political Action Committee (BAPAC)**  
**Of**  
**Contra Costa County**  
**California PAC ID# 990118**

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January 5, 2013

Honorable Mayor Gayle Mc Laughlin  
Members of Richmond City Council  
450 Civic Plaza  
Richmond, CA 94804

**Re: Councilmember-Elect Gary Bell Replacement**

Dear Mayor Mc Laughlin

When faced with unfortunate circumstances, we are called to come together. It is not the time to make political hay. This is the message President Obama had for the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives this week after the GOP put politics first and delayed a vote on storm relief for victims of Hurricane Sandy. It is a message we in Richmond would be wise to heed as we confront the extraordinary circumstances arising from the illness of City Councilmember-Elect Gary Bell. We are deeply saddened by the January 3rd press release that Councilmember-Elect Gary Bell is unable to assume office due to time needed to recover from hospitalization.

BAPAC initiated discussions with all of the leading African American organizations in Richmond and as a result the Community Mobilizing Leadership Coalition was established in part to explore potential candidates to replace Mr. Bell—elected on November 6 to the council seat vacated by outgoing member Jeff Ritterman. According to the City Charter Council members have considerable latitude in determining when a vacancy exists, necessitating replacement of Mr. Bell. The Charter is quite clear that it is within the power of a majority of the remaining council members to vote to name a replacement or, in the alternative, allow the vacancy to be filled at a later date by a special election.

What the Charter is not clear on is how council members ought to act should a vacancy be declared. And this is the focal point of our letter.

The major concern expressed by our coalition is that a political faction might seek to take advantage of the situation by attempting to secure the appointment to Mr. Bell's seat his election runner up, Eduardo Martinez. Such a result, of course, would effectively overturn the outcome of the election by awarding a council seat to a member of the Richmond Progressive Alliance, a group whose candidates to replace outgoing Councilman Ritterman were beaten by Mr. Bell and opposed by those who supported Mr. Bell's candidacy.

The better and more honorable approach would be for the Richmond City Council to follow past practice in such circumstances and reach outside the political fray for the good of all.

Let history be our guide. According to Councilman Nat Bates, appointments dates back to 1965 when Bernard Evans, a black labor union organizer was appointed to fill the vacancy created by George Carroll's appointment to Municipal Judge.

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