

Demanding Accountability: Open Letter Campaign to Repeal Unfair Pay Raises in Quincy

Quincy councilors did not respond, despite 6,030 voters signing the petition to repeal the mayor's 79 % salary increase and 4,642 signing to repeal the councilors' 50% raise back in early July. Silence motivated us to launch an Open Letter Campaign. The goal of those letters was and is to request ward councilors to hold ward meetings and councilors-at-large to hold a citywide meeting to address constituents' concerns about the raises. We want a reasonable plan to evaluate salaries with resident participation first, and then, based on that plan, an assessment and decision on salary increases for the mayor and councilors—unlike the illogical sequence proposed by Councilor Ian Cain. We have eight letters (in both English and Chinese)—one for each councilor, except for Ward 5 Councilor Daniel Minton, since he's the only one who stood against the mayor's 79% pay raise. For the councilors-at-large, any Quincy residents can sign, while residents of each ward can sign the letter to their specific ward councilor.

We started the campaign in Quincy's Asian community with two letters addressed to the councilors-at-large, Nina Liang and Noel DiBona. With the help of our volunteers, during the first week (8/13-8/20), we collected 236 signatures (all from the Asian community) for Liang and 251 signatures (from both Asian and non-Asian communities) for DiBona. We sent those to the councilors. In just four days, we collected 111 signatures for Councilor-at-Large Scott Campbell. We kept gathering signatures, and by 9/4, we submitted letters to all eight councilors. In three weeks, the total signature count was: Nina Liang: 432, Noel DiBona: 419, Scott Campbell: 202, Ward 1 David McCarthy: 43, Ward 2 Richard Ash: 32, Ward 3 Ian Cain: 35, Ward 4 James Devine: 37 and Ward 6 William Harris: 55.

As a result of our letters, we've spoken with three councilors: Minton, DiBona and Campbell. One councilor mentioned that in two years, the \$285,000 salary would set a benchmark for other mayors. That's exactly what we're trying to prevent! Check out our collaborators' site at AJustMass.com to see their actions. The same three councilors did appear to agree to discuss the issue of the raises further with the other councilors. They also appeared to be taking more public discourse seriously. We also received a polite reply from Ward 2 Councilor Ash. He couldn't meet with us before the 9/9 council meeting. We know Ward 6 Councilor Harris has announced his rejection of his own 50% pay raise. Ward 4 Councilor Devine spoke with people at the rally outside the front door of City Hall after the 9/9 council meeting. Unfortunately, as of today (9/11), we still haven't heard from the other councilors.

While collecting signatures, we handed out flyers for the 9/9 protest at City Hall Plaza, and the response was fantastic! Many people took extra flyers to help spread the word. A lot of others saw the posts on social media and brought their family and friends to the signing locations to sign. People are grateful that we're keeping this issue alive.

Next, we're planning a Halloween Sign Holding event, where we'll dress up ourselves and our pets. We will carry signs demanding Accountability and Transparency from our local government, and, of course, call to Rescind the Raises! We'll also organize additional actions to keep this issue at the forefront as we approach next year's local elections.

We are WeVoters.org, a new grassroots group focused on holding local government accountable through the power of our votes. We work closely with the AjustQuincy group. Our shared goal is to improve transparency and accountability in city government and make Quincy a better place.

Susan Yuan, Kathy Thrun and Virginia Ryan

Quincy

WeVoters.org