



March 10, 2021

Dear Honorable Commissioners,

I write in opposition to the hiring of Andrew Westall as Executive Director of the LAUSD Redistricting Commission. This summer Unrig LA joined over 30 local, state, and national organizations in signing onto a letter demanding the City of LA ensure a more independent, transparent, and accessible redistricting process.¹ The LA Times Editorial Board also voiced support for these “common-sense changes.”² Council President Martinez introduced an amending motion which embraced many of the coalition’s proposals.³ While the motion did not impose a complete ban on hiring recent city employees as we requested, it did “request the City’s Redistricting Commission to avoid hiring current or former city staff that has been out of city service for under a year.” The commission should not take this request lightly, especially when considering *this particular candidate* for the position.

Mr. Westall was, until a few months ago, a longtime senior aide to former Council President Wesson and the Executive Director of the 2012 City Council Redistricting Commission which ultimately left our city deeply divided. His expertise in redistricting may be without question, but so are his conflicts of interest. The coalition letter and its recommendations were drafted in large part to prevent a repetition of the flawed process Mr. Westall presided over. Redistricting may never be pretty, but confirming Andrew Westall as ED ensures it will get *quite* ugly.

¹ Coalition Letter - Final list of signatories:
https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2020/20-0668-S1_PC_AB_09-24-2020.pdf

²Editorial: L.A.'s last redistricting was a sham. City leaders have to do better this time - LA Times Oct 2, 2020:
<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-10-02/los-angeles-redistricting-commission-reforms>

³ Martinez/Buscaino Amending Motion:
https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2020/20-0668_misc_amend_martinez_8-11-2020.pdf

During the previous redistricting cycle Commissioner Helen Kim (an appointee of former City Controller Wendy Greuel) called out Councilmember Huizar's Chief of Staff for tampering with the speaker cards to prioritize Huizar's constituents.⁴ Elected officials and their staff should have never been allowed anywhere near a place where they could potentially interfere with the order of speakers.

In 2012 Former CM Parks wrote to the LACCRC alleging that at the February 2nd commission meeting, "Mr Westall told one of my employees: Tell your boss to go F himself. To clarify, Mr. Westall did not stop at the letter F." Not long after CM Parks would find himself drawn out of his own district. Commissioner Kim said the maps were "absolutely" designed to punish CM Parks and Perry for their ongoing feud with Council President Wesson.⁵ No elected official gained more out of the 2012 process than Wesson's self described best friend on the council, Jose Huizar. This fall Perry and Parks authored an op-ed on how the redistricting process helped enable Councilmember Huizar's corruption.⁶

On that front, the Co-Chief of Staff Mr. Westall served alongside has been named in an FBI warrant and that investigation remains ongoing. The Rules Committee, which Mr. Westall staffed for Council President Wesson, has also drawn a great deal of scrutiny. The rollout of the social equity program hit a snag when city hall insiders got early access to apply.⁷ In addition, a former staffer of Councilmember Huizar has alleged that he was wrongfully terminated in retaliation for speaking to the FBI, where he disclosed pay-to-play cannabis schemes sprawling out of city hall.⁸ The City of LA is on the verge of approving a

⁴ *LA City Council redistricting discussions turn nasty* - LA Times - February 15, 2012:
<https://www.latimes.com/local/la-xpm-2012-feb-15-la-me-redistricting-theater-20120215-story.html>

⁵ *Wesson denies newly drawn council districts are payback* - LA Times - February 17, 2012:
<https://www.latimes.com/local/la-xpm-2012-feb-17-la-me-city-redistricting-20120217-story.html>

⁶ *Op-Ed: How Jose Huizar's alleged crimes may have been aided by redistricting* LA Times - August 10, 2020:
<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-08-10/op-ed-how-jose-huizars-alleged-crimes-hay-have-been-aided-by-redistricting>

⁷ *Pilot of LA's cannabis program must overcome stumbles, fury and threats.* LA Times - Jan 12, 2020:
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-01-12/cat-packer-cannabis-marijuana-licensing-los-angeles>

⁸ *Former Huizar Staffer Sues, Alleges Councilman Wanted Cannabis Kickbacks* - LAist March 24, 2020:
<https://laist.com/latest/post/20200324/los-angeles-city-hall-fbi-investigation-corruption-huizar-leon-lawsuit>

significant legal settlement in this case.⁹ Mr. Westall has at no point been named in any investigation, and deserves the benefit of the doubt. That being said, it would be wise to avoid unnecessarily thrusting those complications upon the commission during the trial of Jose Huizar.

During his brief hiatus from city service Mr. Westall has joined twitter, and a few weeks ago he made some waves by firing off a barrage of disparaging tweets directed at Councilmember Nityha Raman. This included a not so friendly warning that “Hiring a bunch of neophytes who have no experience in City Hall and how City Council works will take you down the same path as your predecessor...You are now an insider.”¹⁰ After the DA announced insufficient evidence to bring a corruption case against CM Wesson, Mr. Westall took fire at two LA Times journalists, deriding them as having no “regard for the truth/facts” and producing “#FakeNews.”¹¹ His celebration may be premature, as the FBI has made no such announcement.

The LA City Council Redistricting Commission heeded the lessons of 2012 by explicitly barring recent city employees from applying to serve as Executive Director. This Commission should do likewise and deliver upon the unanimous request of our City Council and Mayor. Completely avoiding the hiring of former city officials may be difficult to do, but it’s essential when it comes to the single most important and impactful hiring the commission will make.

Sincerely,
Rob Quan

⁹ Council File 21-0229:
<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=21-0229>

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/califas_andrew/status/1363234228368941056

¹¹ https://twitter.com/califas_andrew/status/1367273291644338178?s=10