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## MEMORANDUM

**Subject:** 5<sup>th</sup> District At-Large Election data for 1999 - 2007

**To:** Gayle Holliday, Co-chair and members of the KCMO Charter Review Commission

**Date:** October 7, 2013

You requested that I submit data to support my testimony to the Charter Review Commission on August 26, 2013. The data are provided as attachments (pdf) in an email communication.

The 5th district became a majority black district in the 70's. The first African American elected to the council from the district was Bruce Watkins in 1975. Watkins, who was one of the first 2 African Americans elected to the council (in 1963 from the 3rd district along with Dr. Earl Thomas who was elected at large) became the first African American to run for mayor in 1979. (In 1966 Watkins was the first African American elected to a county office-Jackson County Circuit Clerk). In the 1979 mayoral election he lost to a white Republican.<sup>1</sup>

In 1983 Mark Bryant, an attorney, was the first African American elected at large to represent the predominately black 5th district. He was re elected in '87. When term limits were enacted in 1991 he was succeeded by Ken Bacchus, an African American planner and developer who prevailed in a close contest against a w/m doctor. Bacchus was reelected in 1995 winning in a landslide over a b/m minister. Every African American elected at large in the 5<sup>th</sup> district was college educated.

In 1999 the current cycle of uneducated white women, losing by substantial margins within the district but, winning city wide over educated (including two lawyers) African Americans commenced.

In 1999 Becky Nace was the victorious w/f candidate. She was a high school graduate. Holli Holliday a (b/f) Howard University grad and lawyer from a prominent and political African American family garnered 60% of the vote in the 5th district but only 43% of the city wide vote in the wards in Jackson County (south of the river). She received 75% of the vote in the other

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<sup>1</sup> Although city elections are nonpartisan it had been several years, maybe decades, since a Republican had been elected mayor in heavily Democratic Kansas City.

majority black district-district 3. In the predominately white northland Nace prevailed 80.90% to 19.01%.

In 2003 Nace prevailed over Wesley Fields an African American Yale law school graduate and attorney with a major law firm. Like Holliday, his father and siblings are also lawyers. He received 60% of the vote in the 5th district and 64% in the 3rd.<sup>2</sup> In the northland it was Nace 72.9% to Fields 27.06%.

In the 2007 election Cindy Circo (w/f) a H.S. grad and nail tech prevailed over Rev. Michael Brooks (b/m) a military veteran and ordained minister & pastor of a prominent Baptist church. In the 5th district Brooks received 64% of the vote to Circo's 36%. In Jackson County she outpolled him 51% to 49%. In the northland the vote was 75.87% for Circo to 24.12% for Brooks (4 years later Brooks ran in district and won).

The African American community did not field a candidate against the incumbent Circo in 2011. Recently, an African American attorney who had expressed an interest in running for the seat in 2015 bowed out upon learning that a Caucasian female had moved into the district and embarked upon a campaign. If historical voting patterns are a guide it is not likely that this woman, like Nace or Circo would be the preference of the majority of the voters in the district had he decided to run. However, the racially polarized voting and propensity of the majority white electorate to prefer uneducated white women to educated African American professionals make it difficult, if not impossible, for an African American to win an at large election to represent the predominately black 5<sup>th</sup> district on the city council.

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<sup>2</sup> His lower 3rd district vote may be attributed to a change in boundaries of the 3rd district after 2000 redistricting which added more predominately white precincts.