

# **Election Method Review and Recommendation**

Albany Charter Review Committee

? ???? 2018

# Albany Now: Plurality At Large

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- Is this the best approach?

# Election Method Study

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- After three years of research and consideration, the Charter Review Committee concluded the answer is yes.
- The Committee subsequently recommended transitioning to ranked choice at large.



# Transition Motivation

**Original motivation (carrot):** Better democracy (Charter Review Committee's initial motivation)

# Review Process

1. Developed list of criteria for judging methods with input from the City Council, the City Manager, and the School Board
2. Selected election methods to be rated against criteria
3. Judged each method against each criterion based on both literature review and original research
4. Considered if there was a consensus conclusion and recommendation

# Methods, Criteria and Results

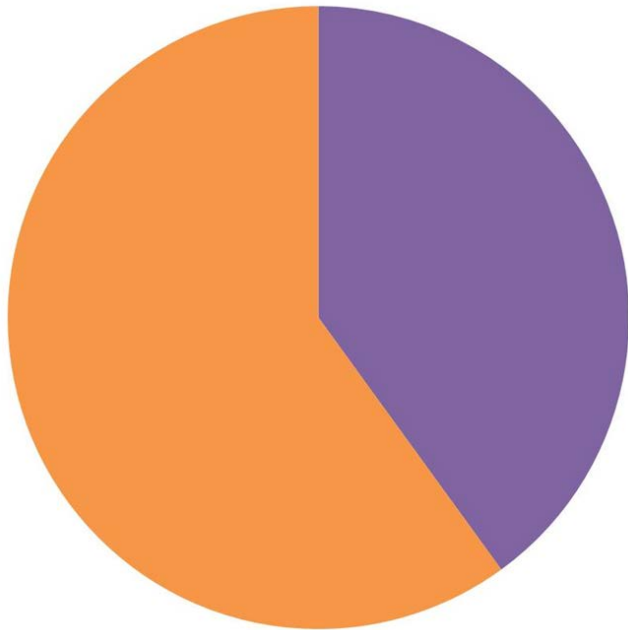
Method Criterion	Plurality	Cumulative	Limited	Ranked choice
Cost	Best			Worst
Turnout	Worst			Best
Probability of representation	Worst			Best
More candidates/ competitive				
Simplicity/ ease of use		Worst	Best	Worst
Stable/ effective government	Worst			Best

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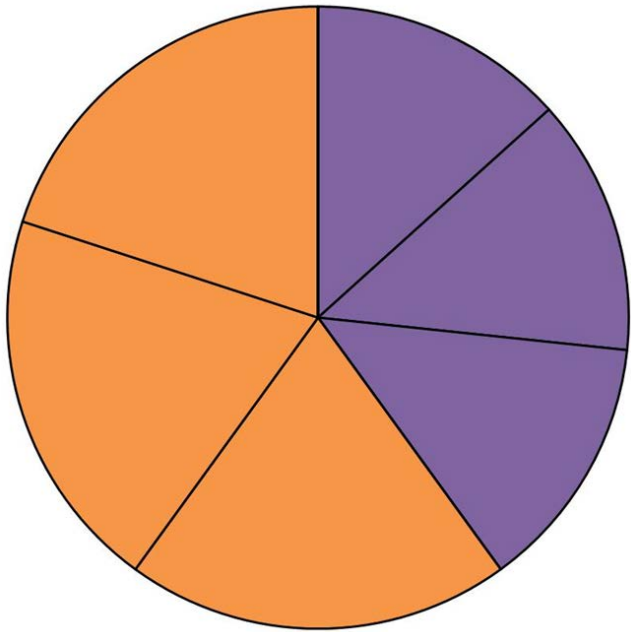
# Ranked Choice v. Plurality Benefits

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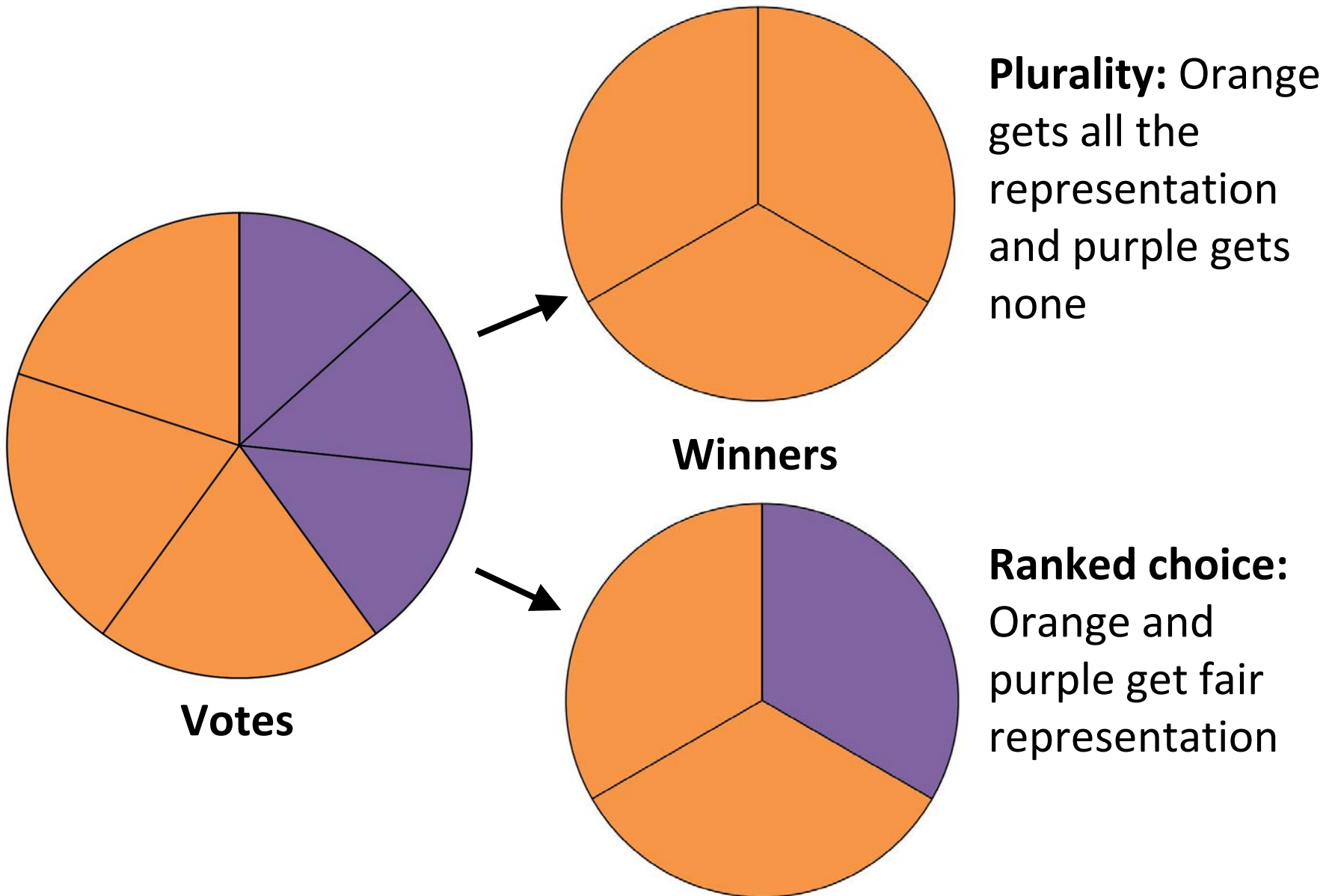
**Votes**

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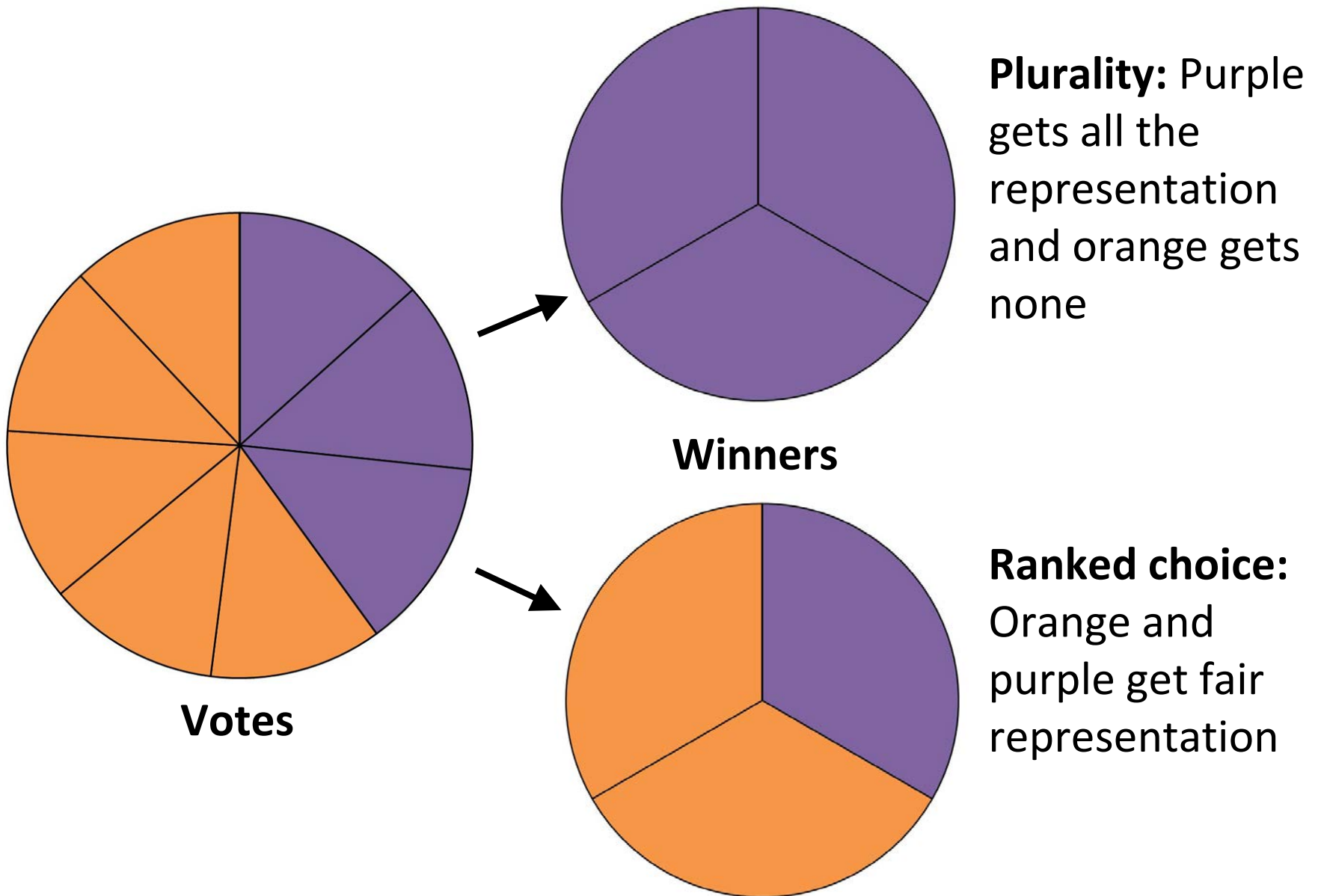
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**Ranked choice** provides governing stability (consistent policy direction), and results in fair representation, which increases voter turnout

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- Albany's budget is ~\$24 million dollars/year



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- This is how San Leandro, San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland switched to ranked choice (establish goal for Registrar/Board of Elections to work towards)

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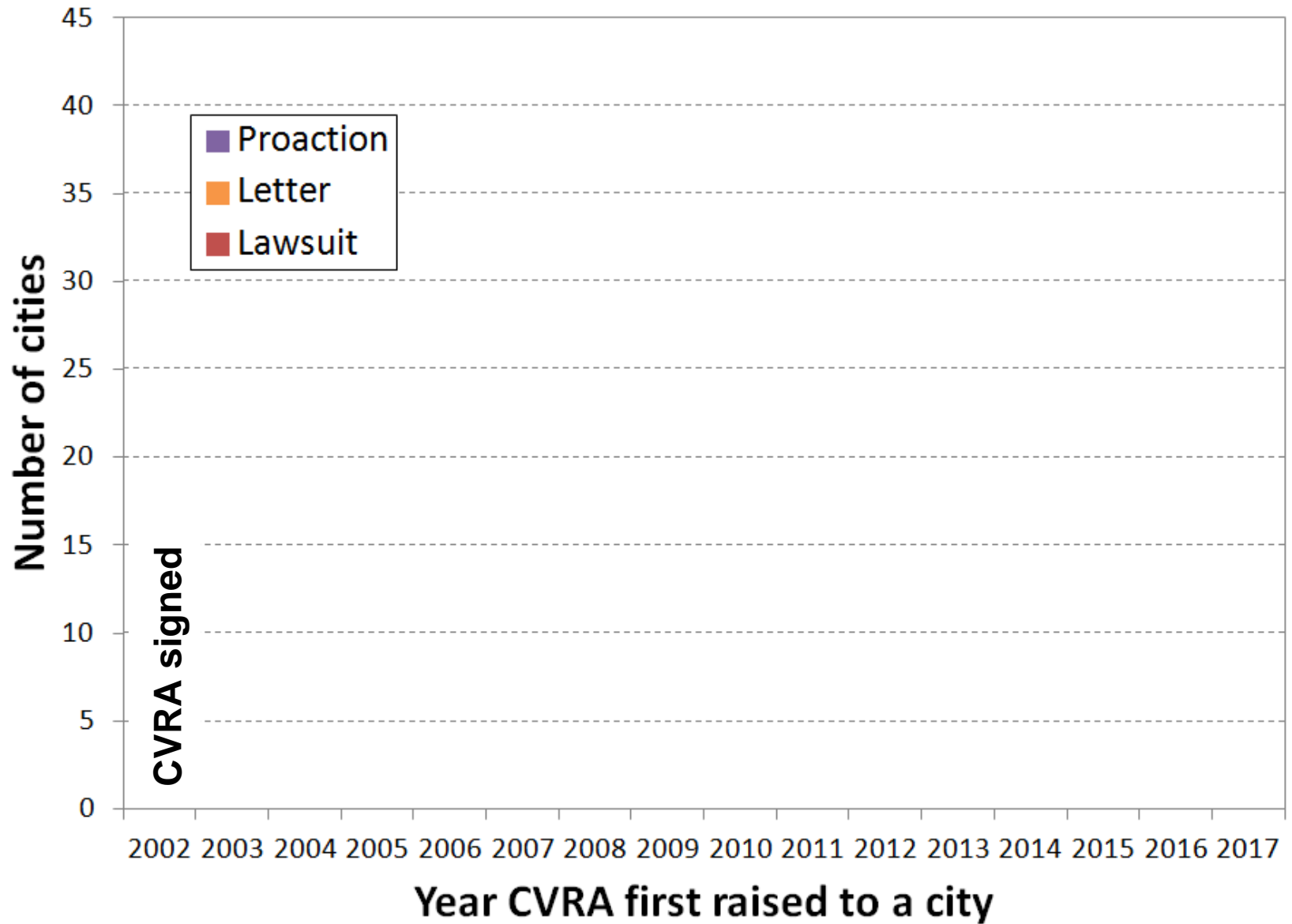
**Recent motivation (stick):** Avoid being forced to district elections at a cost of about \$100,000 under the California Voting Rights Act

# CVRA

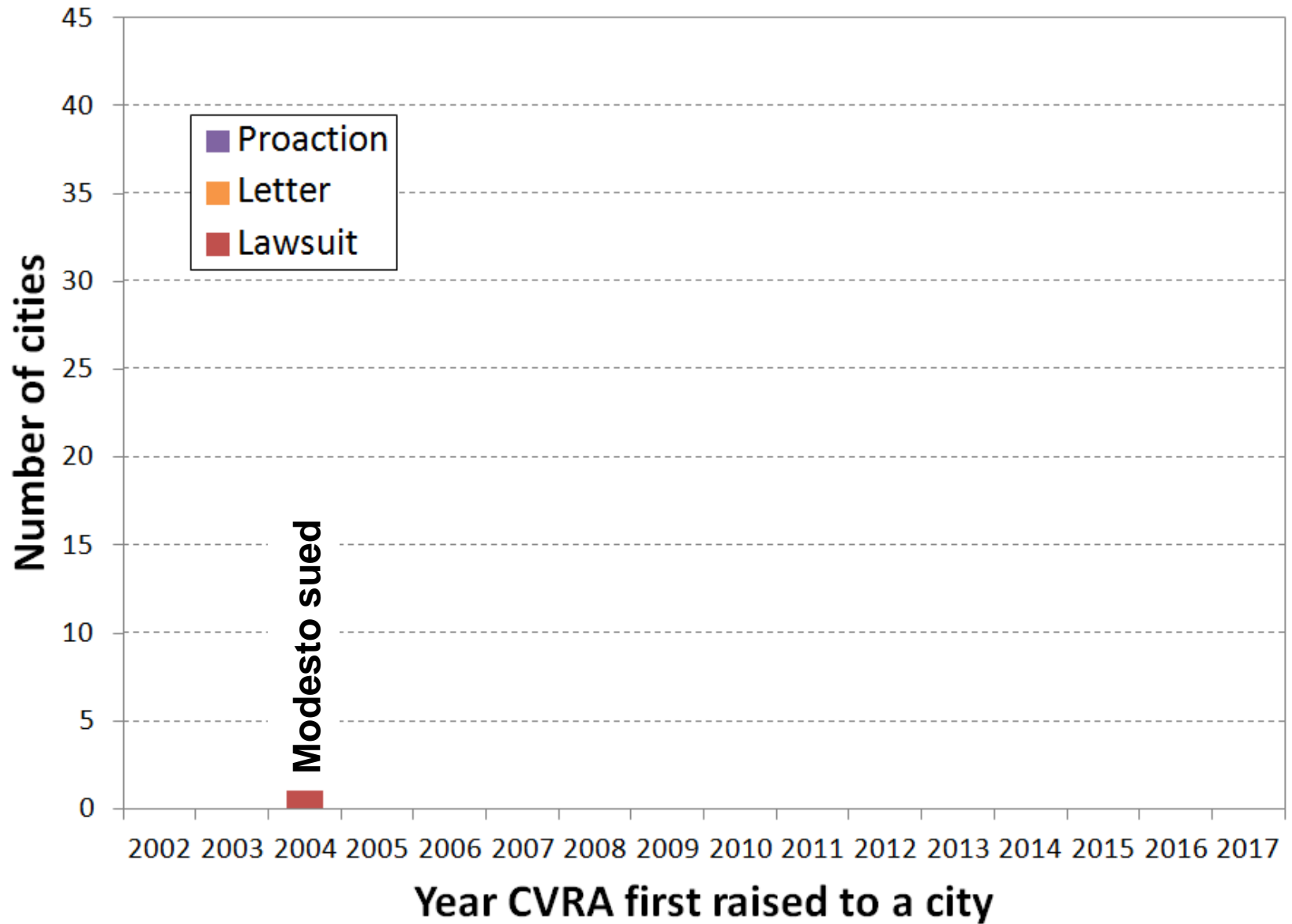
The California Voting Rights Act (CVRA),  
signed into law in 2002

- Allows overturning any election method that reduces a racial or ethnic group's ability to elect candidates of its choice
- Losing jurisdictions required to pay plaintiff's attorney's fees
- Precludes lawsuits against district elections (a legal "safe harbor")

# CVRA Actions

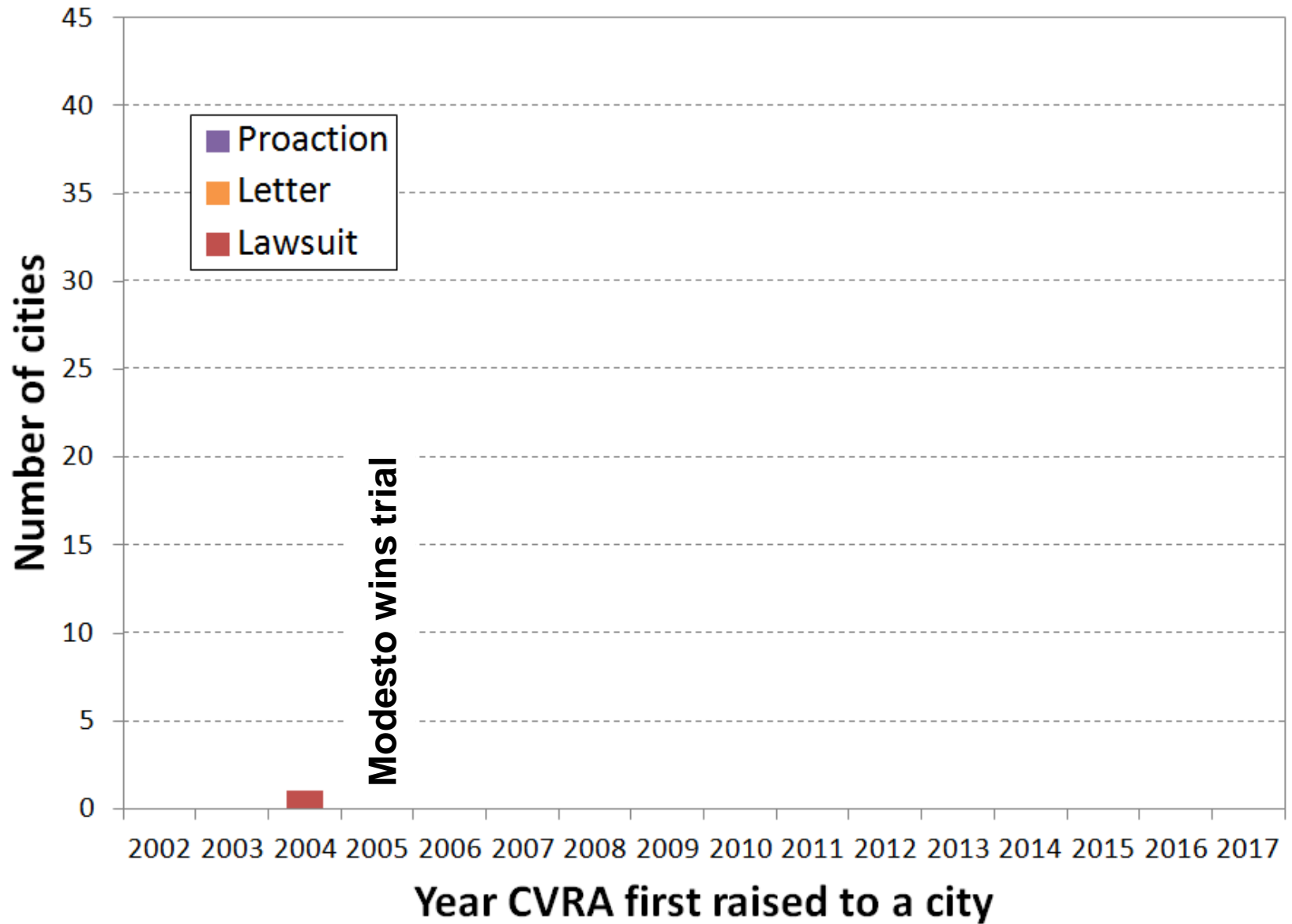


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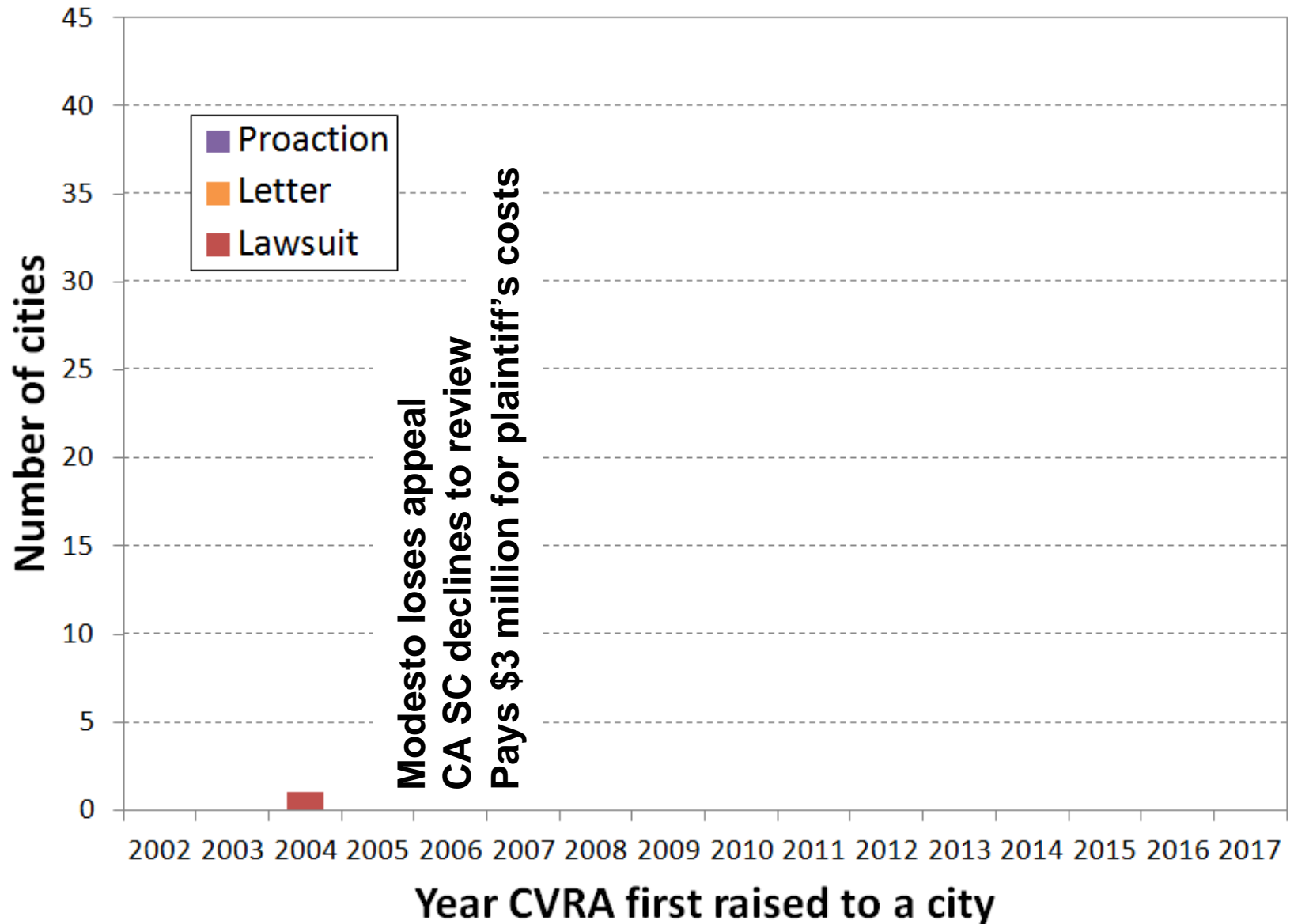




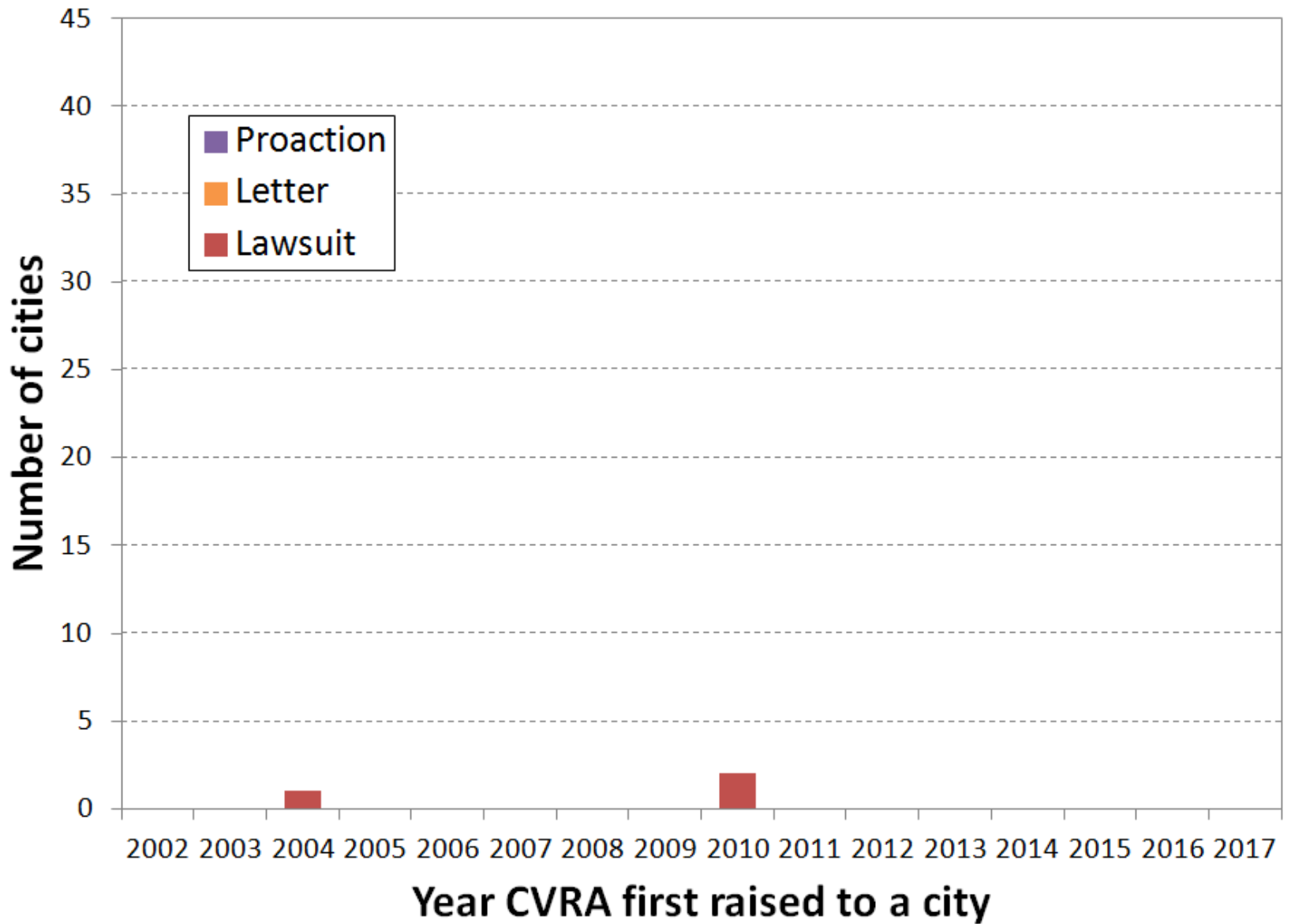
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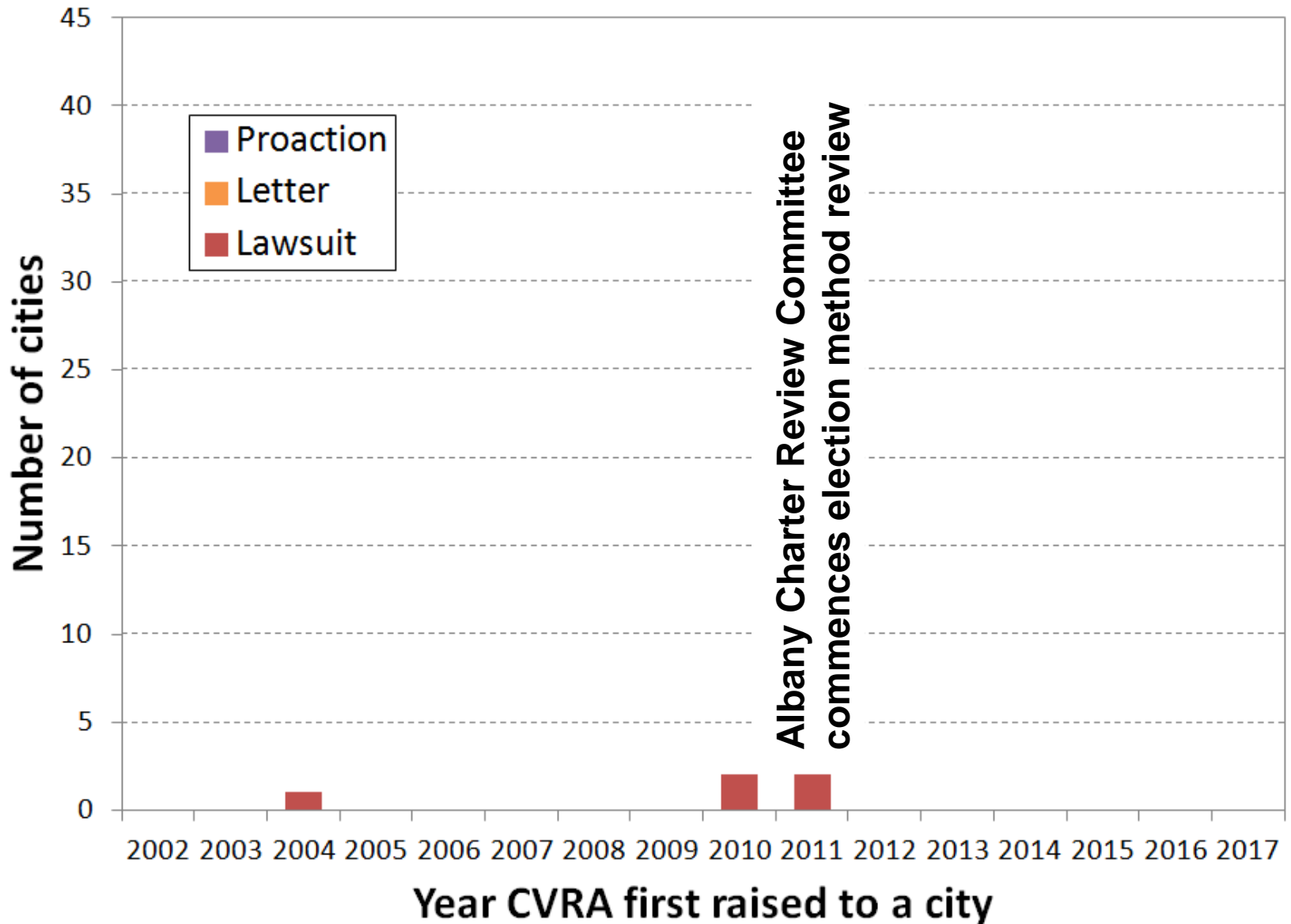
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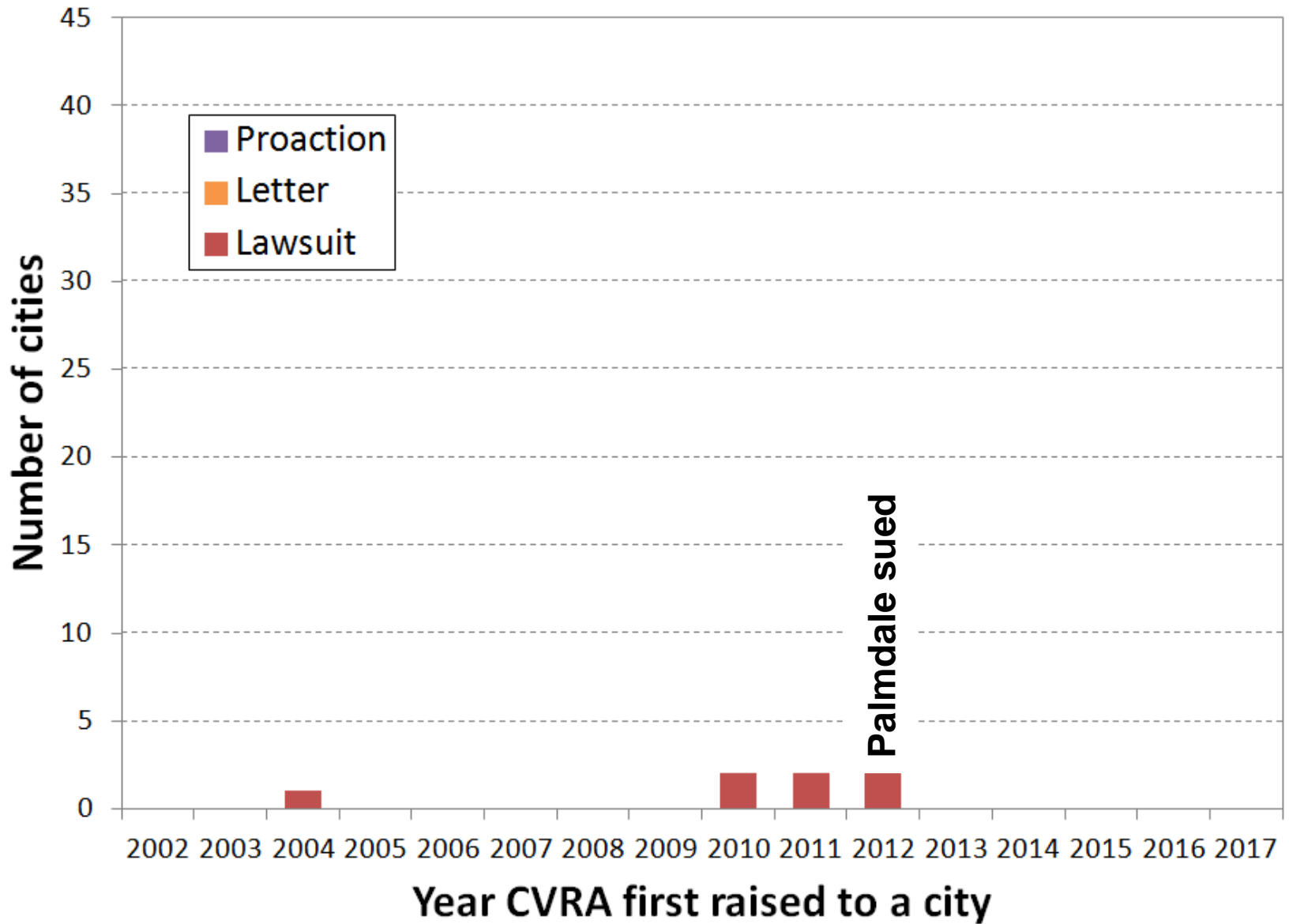
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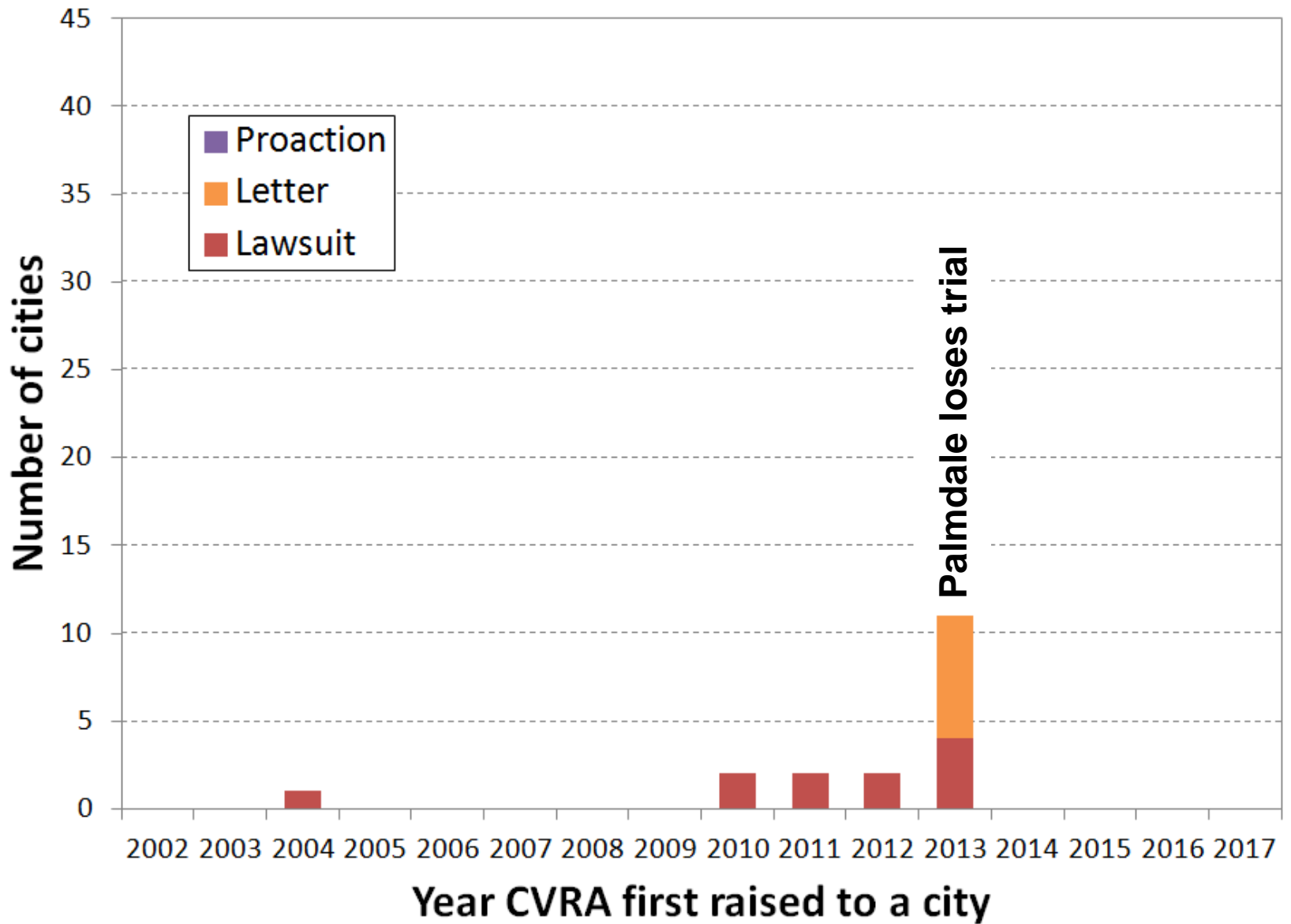
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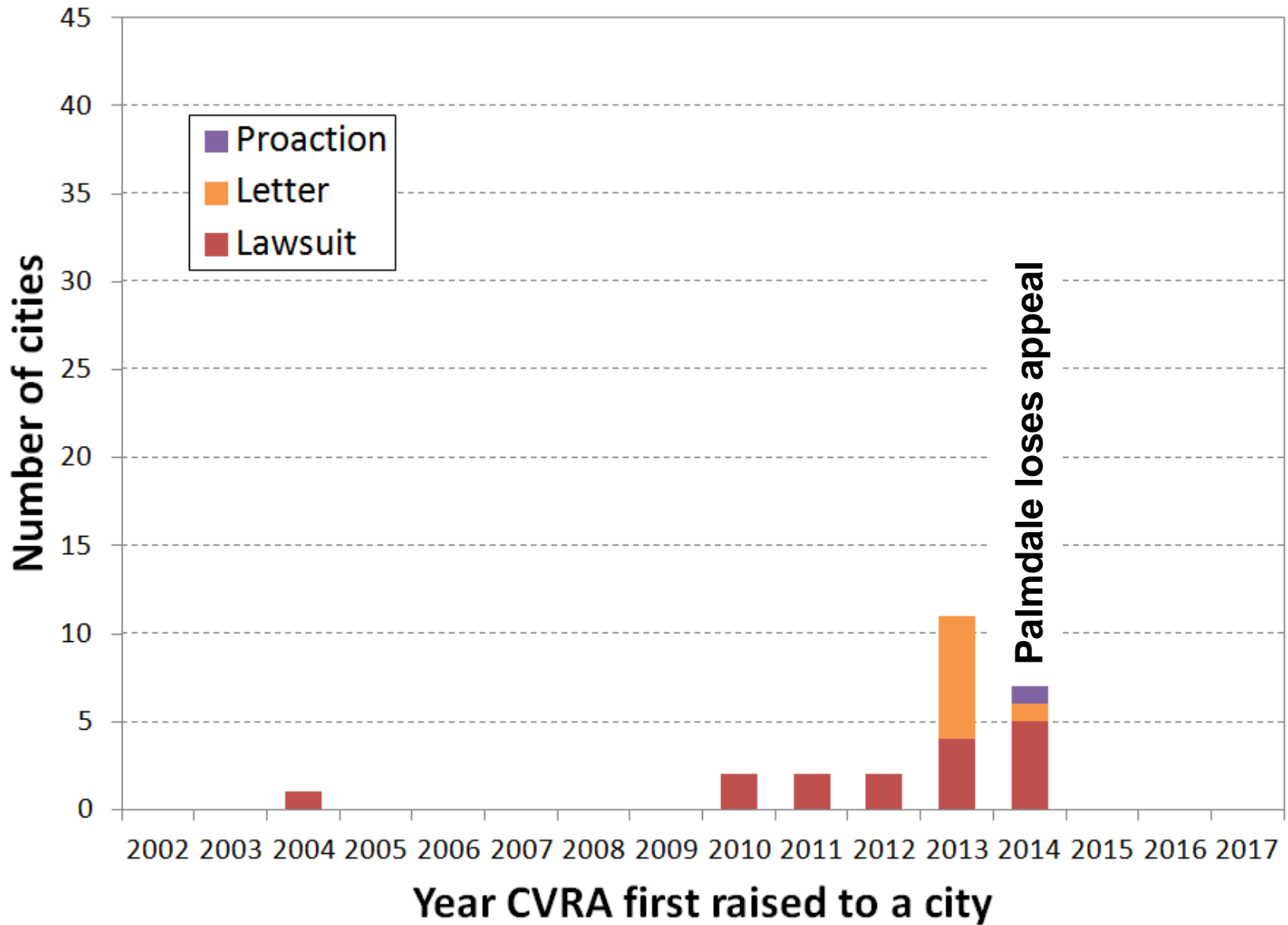
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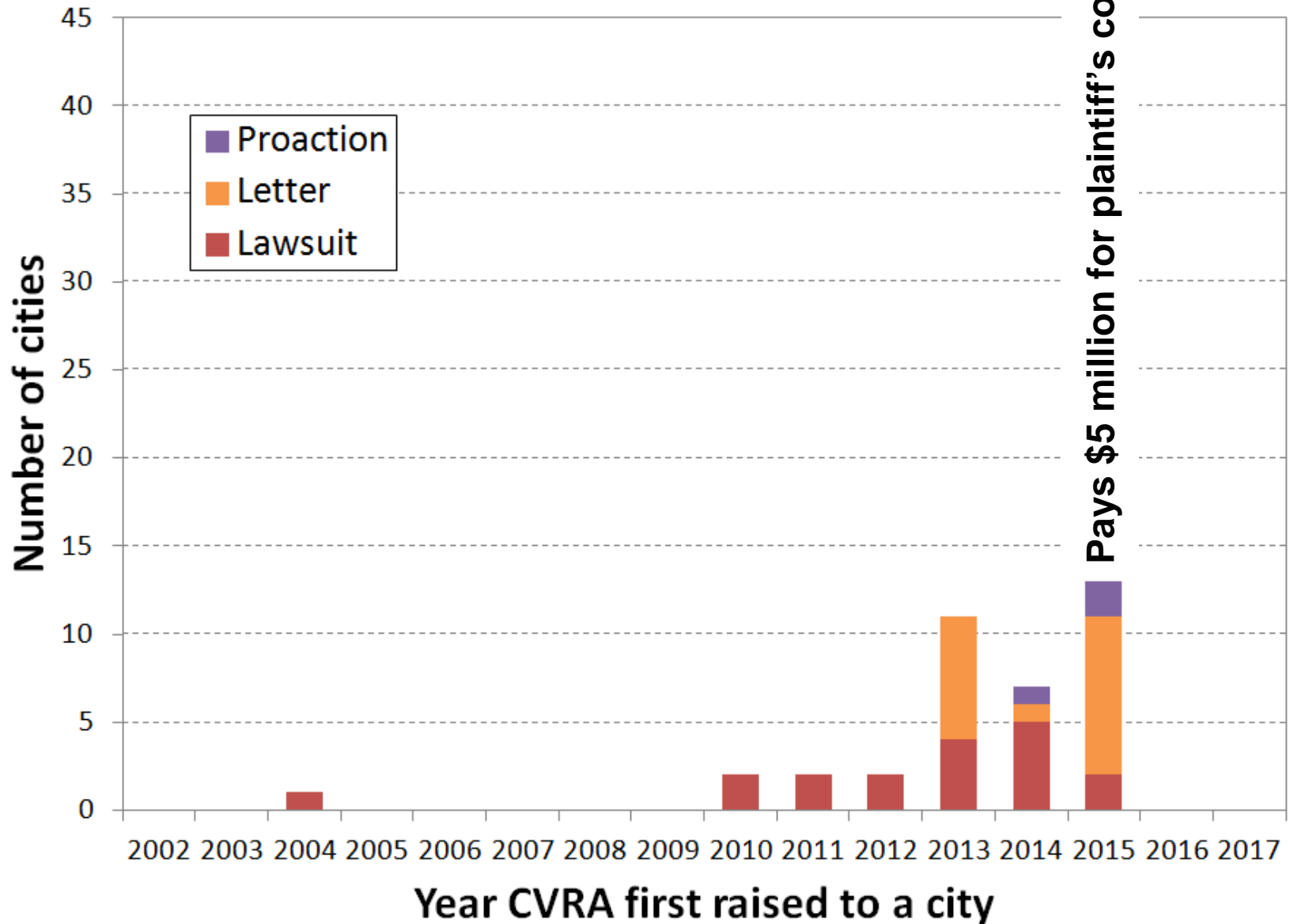
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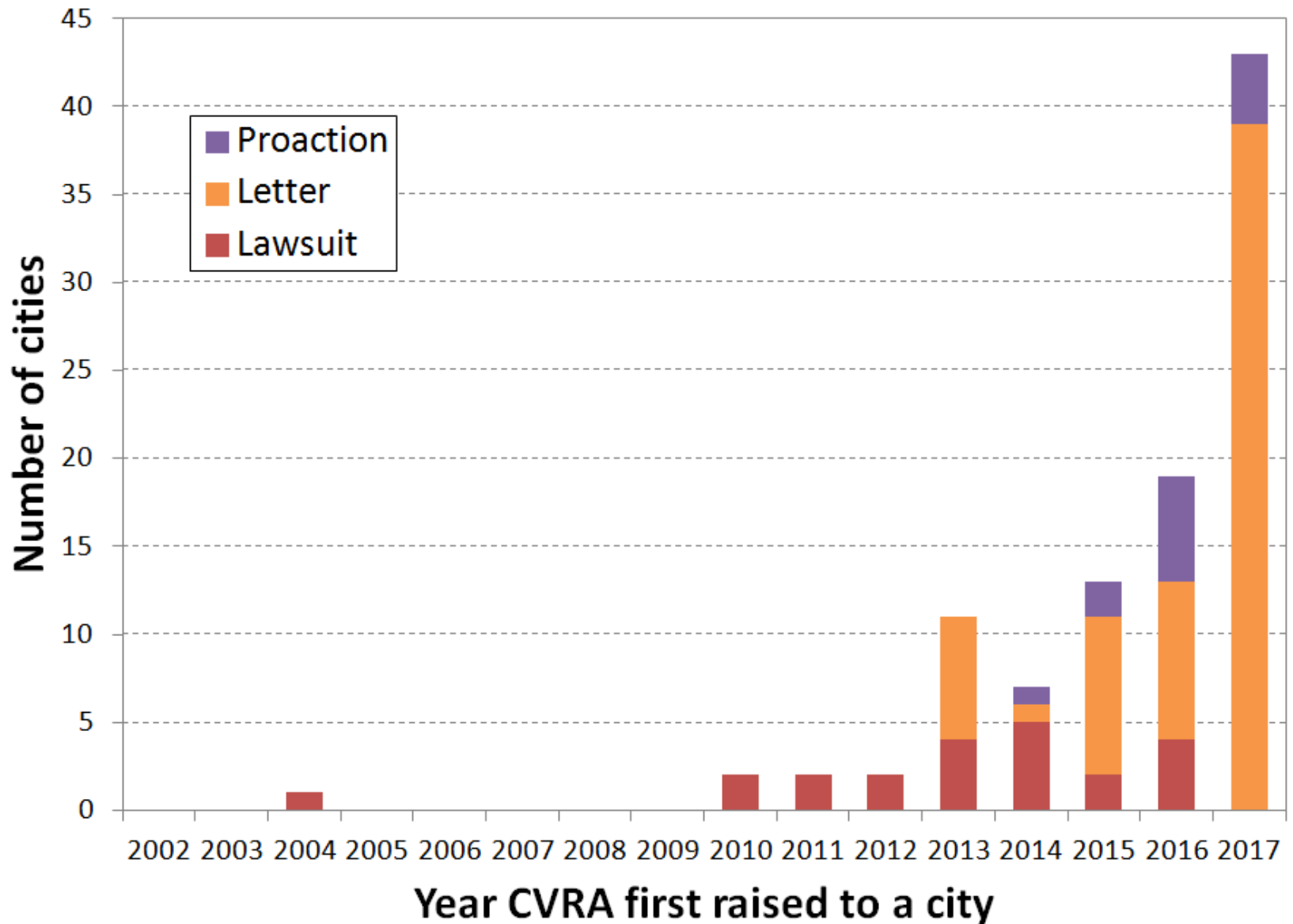


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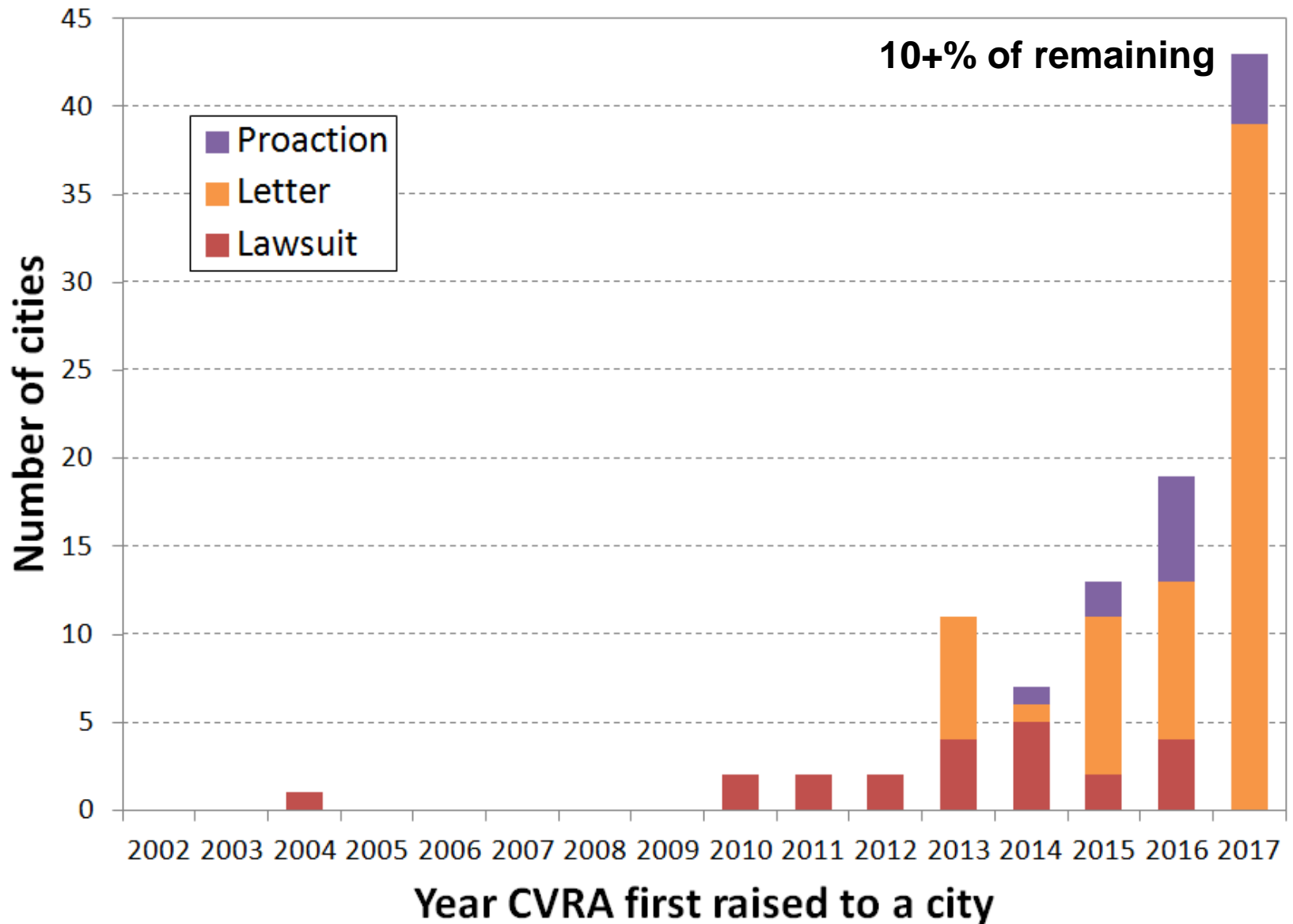




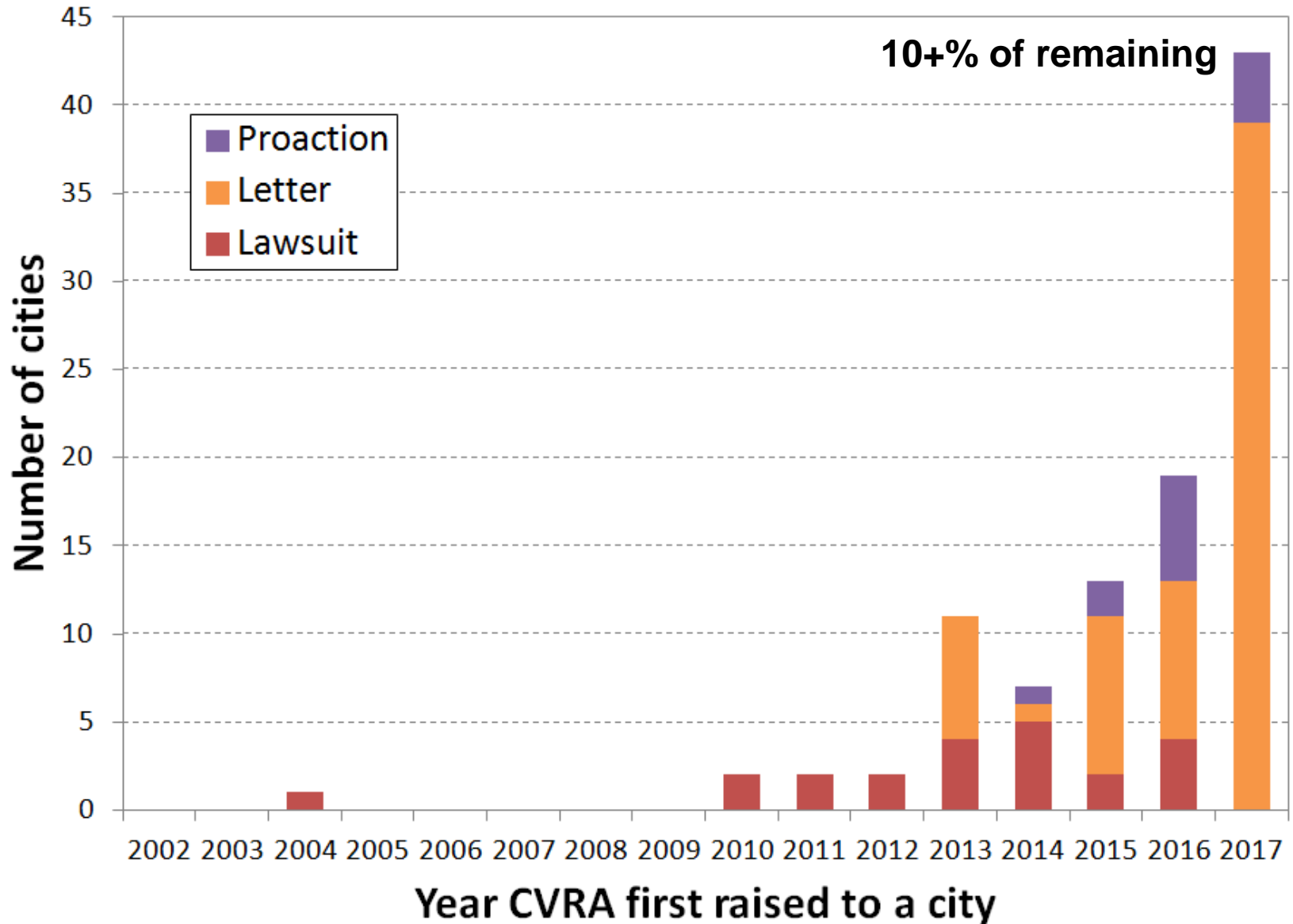
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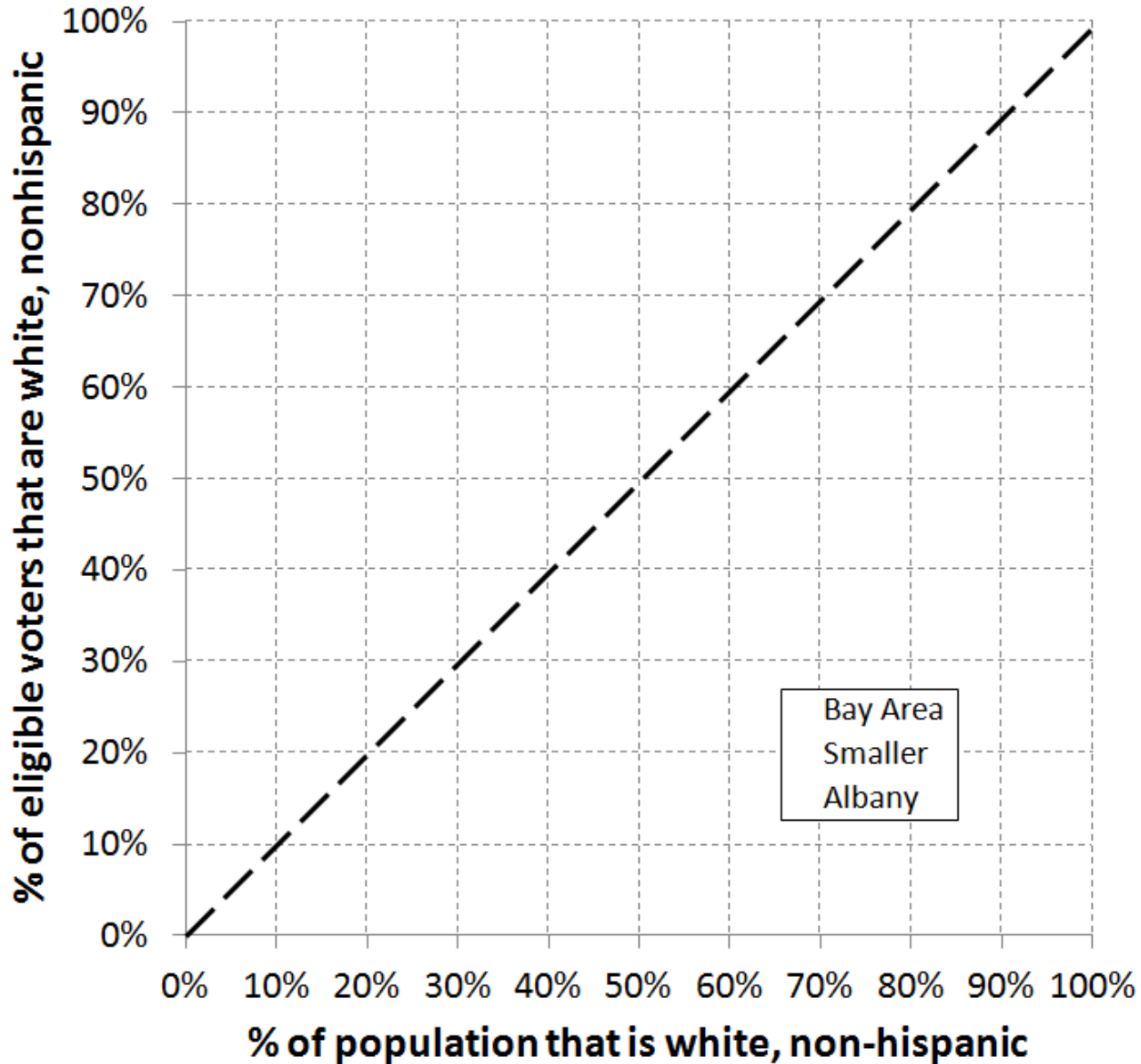


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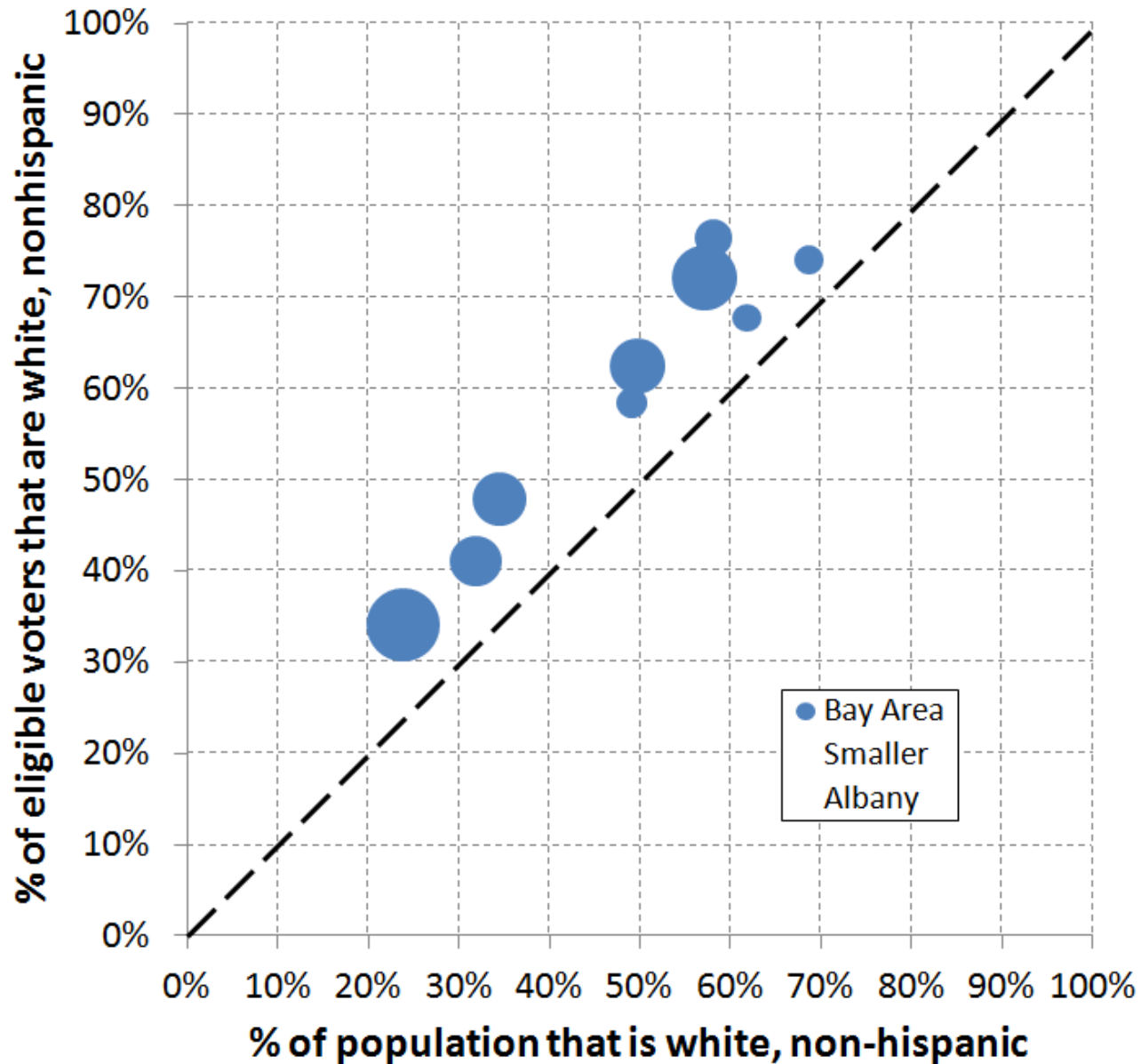


Bay Area cities and school districts other than Santa Clara start receiving CVRA threats

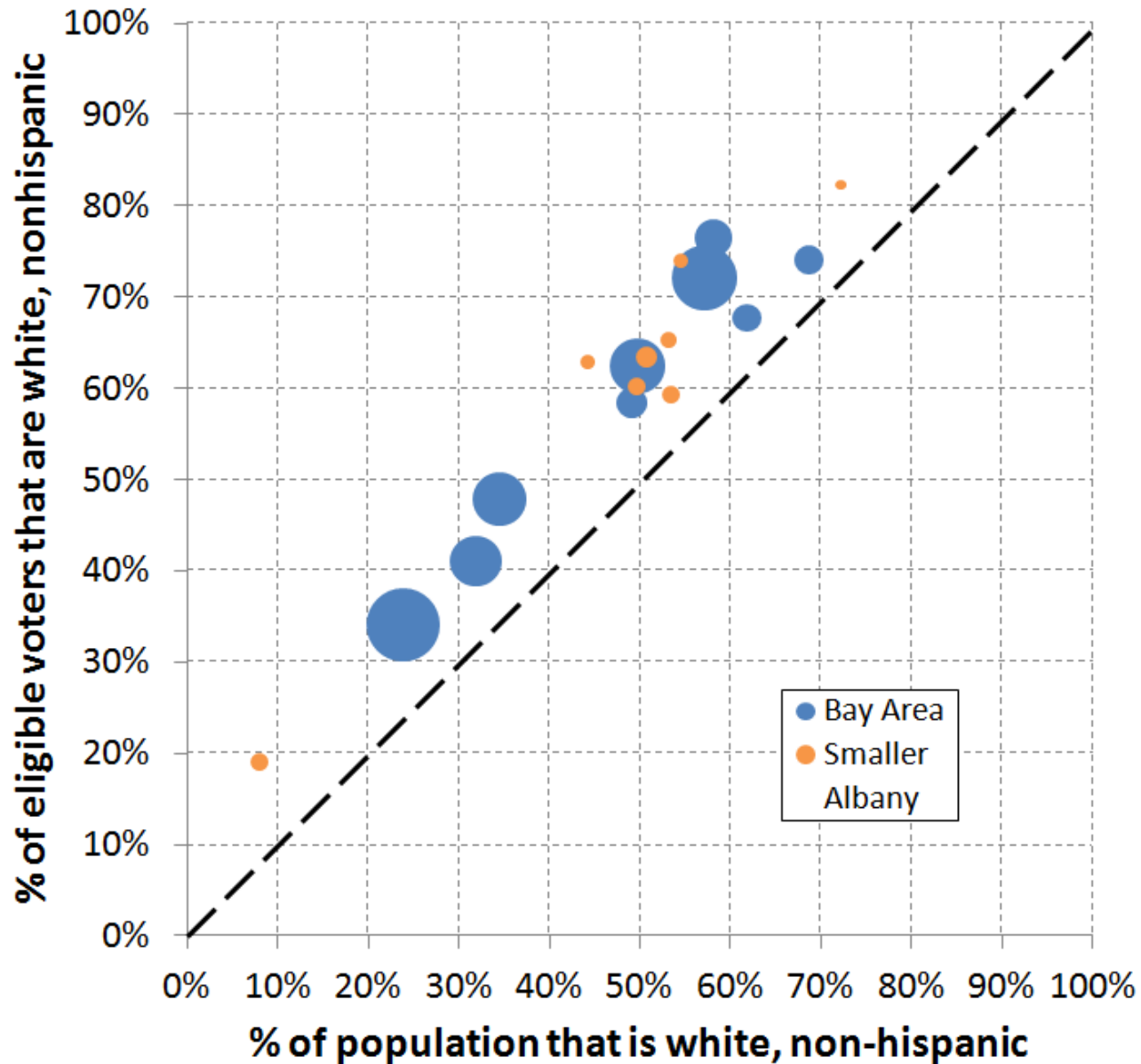
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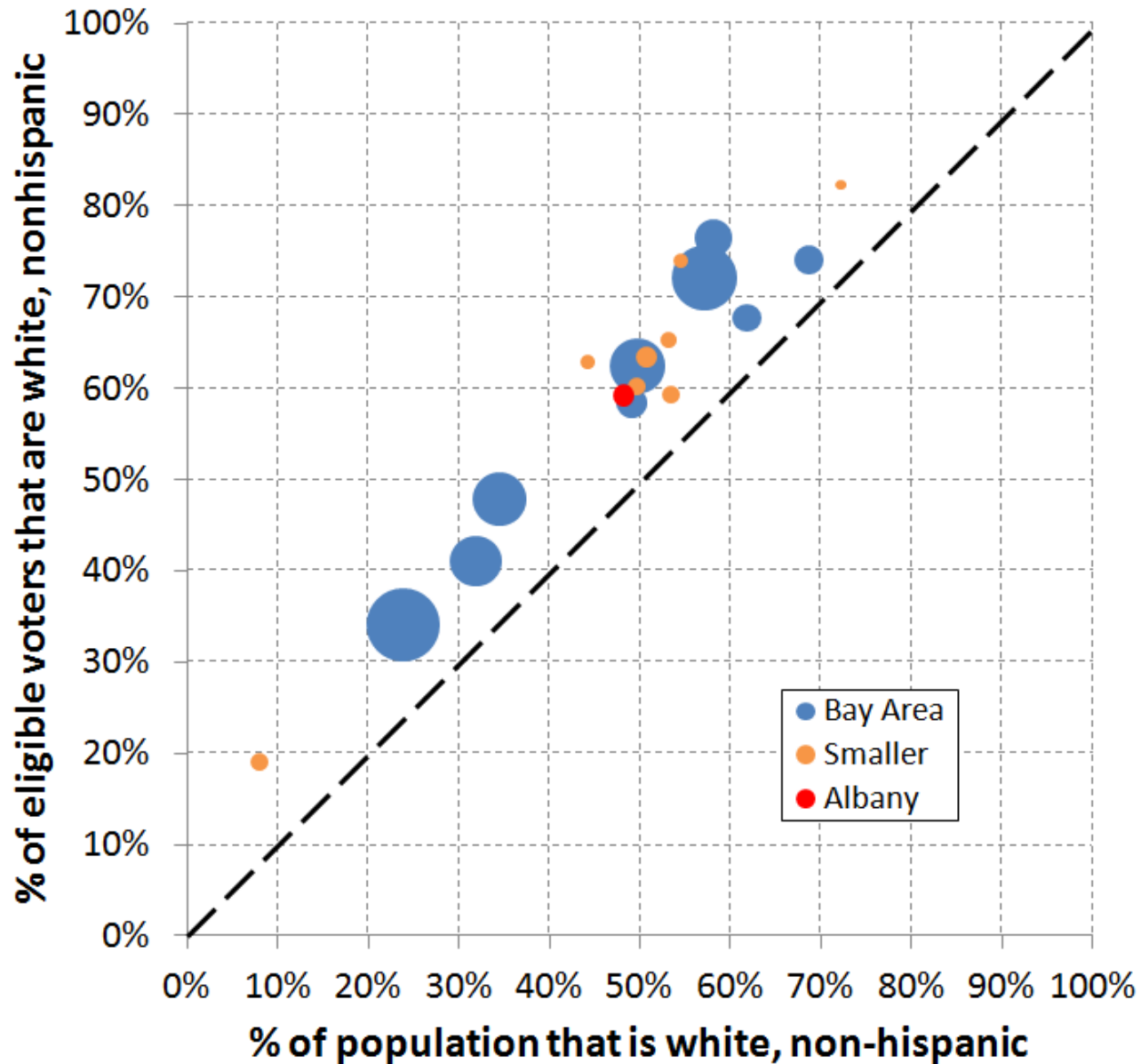
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# CVRA Threat Consequences

- \$30,000 minimum to firm threatening suit
- \$70,000 average to draw lines for district elections
- Times two for City + School District
- Being forced to district elections, which the Charter Review Committee ruled out five years ago because of Albany's small size
- At this juncture ranked choice at large is Albany's best option to prevent being forced to district elections

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**Pro:** Eliminates artificial swings in governance

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**Pro:** It costs less than receiving a CVRA threat

**Pro:** It is Albany's best option to prevent being forced to district elections by a CVRA threat

# Ranked Choice At Large

- The Charter Review Committee is preparing an amendment specifying a transition to ranked choice at large when the following conditions are met:
  - The County Registrar can run the election,
  - The County Registrar can provide voter education, and
  - The additional cost will be less than a certain amount

# Counting ranked choice at large

**RCV BALLOT**

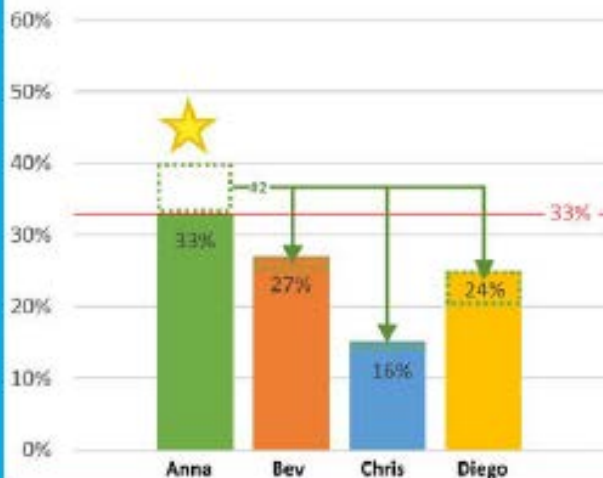
Rank the candidates by order of preference:

- 1 Anna
- 4 Bev
- 2 Chris
- 3 Diego

Step 1: Candidates Over Threshold Win



Step 2: Distribute Surplus



Step 3: Eliminate Lowest Vote-Getters



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- January 2012: List of criteria and methods finalized
  - Research commences regarding each criteria applied to each method and development of consensus

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- Mid 2014: commence considering a recommendation to Council
- Late 2014: Committee refrains from making a recommendation to Council based on interpretation of ambiguous policy regarding advisory body recommendations
  - Committee instead passes a minute motion identifying the superior election method, with a caveat

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- Spring 2016: Council approves drafting amendment