



How to Place a Measure on the Ballot

A Guide for Governing Boards for the County, Cities, School Districts and Special Districts



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This guide was developed in an effort to provide answers to questions frequently asked by governing bodies regarding how to place a measure on the ballot. It is for general information only and does not have the force and effect of law, regulation or rule. In case of conflict, the law, regulation or rule will apply. Persons using this guide must bear full responsibility to make their own determinations as to all legal standards and duties.

What County Elections needs from your governing body:

1. The Resolution to Call the Election and Consolidate

Districts and Cities: Submit a "Resolution Requesting Consolidation of Election and Ordering of Such Election" along with the "Notice to County Clerk of Measure Submitted to the Voters."

County: Submit a "Resolution Requesting Consolidation of Election and Ordering of Such Election."

Schools: Submit the "Resolution Ordering Election, Specifications of the Election Order, and Requesting Consolidation" along with the "Notice to County Clerk of Measure Submitted to the Voters."

Refer to the Administrative Calendar "Attachment A" for Deadlines.

2. The Measure Text

We need clear instructions on what portion of the resolution or ordinance is considered the Full Text of the Ballot Measure to be printed in the Voter's Information Pamphlet for voters. There is no limit on the number of words that can be printed.

If you do not want any measure text printed in the Voter's Information Pamphlet, please provide this direction in writing within the resolution. In this case, instead of measure text, after the analysis of the measure, voters will be directed to contact the Elections Department for a copy of the text of the measure. Jurisdictions will be billed for costs.

3. The 75-Word Ballot Question

A ballot questions must be no more than 75 words (Elections Code §13247 & 9051). See next page on "How to Count Words."

Jurisdictions may want to consider beginning their ballot question with a few key summary words to summarize the measure. The words will count toward the 75-word limit. See examples on Page 5.

Measures are followed by the words "YES" and "NO."

School bond measures are followed by the words: "Bonds--Yes," "Bonds-- No." (Ed. Code §15122)

School reorganization measures are followed by the words: "Reorganization of School Districts - Yes" and "Reorganization of School Districts -- No." Similar words may be used. (Ed. Code §35762)

Assigning Letters to Measures

Measures will be assigned letters by the elections official in alphabetical order, starting with the next letter following the previous election. The order measures appear on the ballot is as follows:

- County Board of Education
- College
- Unified Schools
- High Schools
- Elementary Schools
- County
- Cities
- Districts

In order to allow for the most efficient use of space, the county elections official may vary the order of the measures. (Elections Code §13109)

Measures will be assigned through Z, or as close to the end of the alphabet as possible to accommodate all measures filed for the current election. For example, if the previous election ended with measure V, and five measures are on the next ballot, the measures will be assigned A, B, C, D, E rather than W, X, Y, Z, A.

The elections official may commence designating local measures with any letter of the alphabet following letter "A" and continuing alphabetically, in order to avoid voter confusion that might result from different local measures carrying the same letter designation in successive elections. (Elections Code §13116)

For districts that overlap into other counties, the counties will mutually agree to use a letter designation for the measure that will not conflict or confuse the voter.

Arguments for or against ballot measures

The County Elections Official will prepare and publish a legal notice of the measure including deadlines to file arguments for or against the measure. The County Elections Official will also do news release announcing the measures on the ballot and deadlines for filing arguments. Information will also be posted on the Elections website at www.votescount.com

If more than one argument is submitted, the elections official will select one argument based on the following preference: 1) the governing body or members thereof, 2) an individual voter, bona fide association of citizens who are sponsors or proponents of the measure, 3) bona fide association of citizens, and 4) individual voters eligible to vote on the measure. (Elections Code §9166, 9287, and 9503)

All arguments and rebuttals must be filed with the Signature Statement provided by the county elections official. Obtain the manual "A Guide to Writing Arguments" from the Elections Department if you are planning on submitting an argument. Arguments are limited to 300 words.

Other Ballot Materials

If arguments in favor and against are submitted, filers will have the opportunity to submit rebuttals. Rebuttals are limited to 250 words.

An impartial analysis will be submitted by county counsel or the city attorney, whichever is applicable.

Bond measures require a tax rate statement to be filed by the 88th day before the election. A fiscal impact statement may also be ordered.

How to Count Words

(Pursuant to Elections Code Section 9 – shall not apply to counting words for ballot designations.)

Each word is counted as one word except...

Punctuation: Punctuation is not counted.

Required Titles: Words used in the title of arguments, rebuttals, and analyses, such as "Argument in Favor of Measure A" are not counted. All words used in the 75-word ballot question are counted except for the letter designating the measure.

Proper Nouns & Geographical names: All proper nouns, including geographical names, shall be counted as one word. For example, "Pajaro Valley Unified School District" shall be counted as one word.

Abbreviations: Each abbreviation for a word, phrase, or expression shall be counted as one word.

Hyphenations: Hyphenated words that appear in any generally available dictionary shall be considered as one word. Each part of all other hyphenated words shall be counted as a separate word.

Dates: Dates consisting of a combination of words and digits shall be counted as two words. Dates consisting of only a combination of digits shall be counted as one word. January 1, 2000 shall be counted as two words, whereas 1/1/00 shall be counted as one word.

Numbers: Any number consisting of a digit or digits shall be considered as one word. Any number that is spelled, shall be considered as a separate word. "100" shall be counted as one word, whereas "one hundred" shall be counted as two words.

Phone & Internet: Web site addresses and telephone numbers shall be counted as one word.

Percent Signs (%), Number Signs (#), etc.: It is department policy to count numbers consisting of a digit or digits used with a dollar sign (\$), cent sign (¢), percentage sign (%), or number sign (#) as one word.

How to Raise or Spend Money

- First** Download the Fair Political Practices Commissions' Manual 3 for ballot measure committees at <http://www.fppc.ca.gov/manuals/manual3.pdf>
- Second** File a Form 410 - Statement of Organization within 10 days of receiving \$1,000 in contributions. Include a \$50 payment made payable to the Secretary of State. Thereafter, the \$50 fee is due annually no later than January 15. In addition to the \$50 fee, a penalty of \$150 may be assessed if payment is late.
- For early submissions, mark the "not yet qualified" box. The \$50 fee is requested at this time but is not legally required until the group qualifies as a committee.
- The committee's FPPC ID number will be posted at www.sos.ca.gov. Read instructions carefully as a Form 410 will be rejected if all applicable sections are not completed. All committees must now disclose the financial institution and bank account number used by the committee.
- The form is available online at <http://www.fppc.ca.gov/forms/2012/410.pdf>
- Third** Be prepared to file a Form 460 (long form) for ballot measure committees that plan on raising or spending more than \$1,000. A Form 450 (short form) may be filed for committees that do not plan on raising or spending more than \$1,000.
- Pre-Election Statements and Semi-Annual statements must be filed at certain times prior to the election and then semi-annually until the committee terminates. These reports detail your committee's contributions and expenditures. Know the deadlines and the type of forms you must file.
- For technical advice on completing the forms, contact the
- Fair Political Practices Commission**
 428 J Street, Suite 620
 Sacramento, CA 95814
 General Contact: 916-322-5660
 Advice Line: 1-866-ASK-FPPC (1-866-275-3772)
 Fax: 916-322-0886
 Website: www.fppc.ca.gov
- FOURTH** File Forms 460 and 410 to terminate the committee upon completion of your efforts.

Examples of ballot measure as it will appear on the ballot

MEASURES SUBMITTED TO THE VOTERS		
CITY		
CITY OF SANTA CRUZ		
Z KEY WORD SUMMARY OF MEASURE. Followed by the ballot question. The total number of words, including the summary, may not exceed 75 words. (§13247)	Yes	
	No	

Example with the first few words summarizing the measure in all caps and in bold.

MEASURES SUBMITTED TO THE VOTERS		
CITY		
CITY OF SANTA CRUZ		
Z 75-word ballot question without a summary. (§13247)	Yes	
	No	

Example of a ballot question without a few key words summarizing the measure.

Other attributes such as bullets, italics, underlining, and bolding beyond the title, are not permitted in the ballot question.