



## 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 to supply answers to questions often asked by governing bodies about 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: File 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: File a "Resolution Requesting Consolidation of Election and Ordering of Such Election."

Schools: File 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

Be very clear on what is the Full Text of the Measure. We will print the measure text in the County's Voter Information Guide and post it online. There is no limit on the number of words for the full text of the measure.

If you do not want any measure text printed in the County's Voter Information Guide, please provide this direction in writing within the resolution. In this case, instead of measure text, after the analysis of the measure, we will direct voters to contact the Elections Department for a copy of the text of the measure. We will bill jurisdictions for costs.

### 3. The 75-Word Ballot Question

A ballot question 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.

The words "YES" and "NO" will follow the ballot question.

The words "Bonds Yes," "Bonds No" will follow school bond measures. (Ed. Code §15122)

The words "Bonds Yes," "Bonds No" will follow county board measure. (Gov. Code §29903)

The words "Reorganization of School Districts Yes" and "Reorganization of School Districts No" will follow school district reorganization measures. We may use similar words. (Ed. Code §35762)

## Assigning Letters to Measures

The elections official will assign letters to measures 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

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 County Clerk will assign the measures with A, B, C, D, E rather than W, X, Y, Z, A.

The elections official may start designating local measures with any letter of the alphabet following letter "A" and continuing alphabetically, 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. County Elections will also do a news release announcing the measures on the ballot and deadlines for filing arguments, and they will post the information online at [www.votescount.com](http://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)

Anyone who files an argument or rebuttal must also file a 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 filing an argument. The word limit for argument is 300 words.

## Other Ballot Materials

If an argument in favor and an argument against is filed, the filer will be able to file a response to the argument in favor or against. The word limit for rebuttals is 250 words.

County Counsel or the City Attorney, depending on jurisdiction, will file an impartial analysis. The word limit for an impartial analysis is 500 words.

Bond measures need a tax rate statement filed by the 88th day before the election. There is no word limit.

The board of supervisors may require the County Auditor to write a fiscal impact statement. The word limit for a fiscal impact statement is 500 words. (\$9160). City Finance Directors also sometimes file fiscal impact statements for city measures.

## How to Count Words

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

*We will count each word as one, 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 = 1 word.  
For example, "Pajaro Valley Unified School District" = 1 word.

### **Abbreviations:**

Each abbreviation for a word, phrase, or expression = 1 word.

### **Hyphenations:**

Hyphenated words that appear in any generally available dictionary = 1 word.  
We will count each part of all other hyphenated words as a separate word.

### **Dates:**

Dates consisting of a combination of words and digits, such as January 1, 2020 = 2 words.  
Dates consisting of only a combination of digits, 1/1/2020 = 1 word.

### **Numbers:**

Any number consisting of a digit or digits, such as 100 = 1 word.  
Numbers spelled out, such as one hundred = 2 words.

### **Phone & Internet:**

Web site addresses and telephone numbers = 1 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 (#) = 1 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 \$2,000 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](http://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 \$2,000. File a Form 450 (short form) if your committee does not plan on raising or spending more than \$2,000.
- Pre-Election Statements and Semi-Annual statements must be filed at certain times prior to the election and then semi-annually until you terminate the committee. 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](http://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**

<b>MEASURES SUBMITTED TO THE VOTERS</b>		
<b>CITY</b>		
CITY OF SANTA CRUZ		
<b>Z KEY WORD SUMMARY OF MEASURE.</b> 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.

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

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

We do NOT allow other attributes such as bullets, italics, underlining, and bolding beyond the title in the ballot question.