

Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 9



City and County of San Francisco

## HILLARY RONEN

February 28, 2018

Ballot Simplification Committee  
Attn: Barbara Carr, [publications@sfgov.org](mailto:publications@sfgov.org)

Dear Chair Packard and Committee Members:

As Supervisor of District 9, which includes the Mission, Bernal Heights, and Portola, I am very concerned with the current digest language for this ballot measure and ask that you consider making changes to this language.

While I personally have strong reservations and concerns about police employing Electronic Control Weapons, I respect that the Police Commission, with input from community stakeholders and subject experts, is in the process of devising policy around how and when the San Francisco Police Department would employ these weapons.

There are many factors that are being taken into consideration in developing this policy: safety of the public and officers, alignment with 21st century policing standards, updated use of force guidelines, current law, training, oversight, and accountability.

This ballot measure, put forth by the Police Officers Association, would undercut this process and, instead, would create regulations that cannot be changed and that are potentially harmful to public safety. This is deeply concerning to me.

Therefore, in reviewing draft digest language for the measure, I would like to emphasize a few key points:

- 1) The ballot measure would override current policy being developed by the San Francisco Police Commission, a process that has incorporated extensive input from community stakeholders and subject experts.
- 2) The ballot measure does not merely allow police to use Electronic Control Weapons, it authorizes a specific policy for how they would use them, which includes using the weapons on unarmed suspects who are resisting arrest.
- 3) The ballot measure sets a standard for when the weapons are to be used that cannot be adjusted or changed.

The ballot initiative states: "It shall be the policy of the City to equip officers with Conducted Energy Devices for the purpose of resolving encounters with subjects who are actively resisting, assaultive, or exhibiting any action likely to result in serious bodily injury or death of another person, themselves or a police officer."

This broad use of this weapon is currently under debate by the Police Commission and is in conflict with the recommendation by former Chief Suhr that these weapons not be used on unarmed suspects.

Particularly concerning, this initiative would allow for use on suspects who are “actively resisting.” This is defined by the San Francisco Police Department Use of Force Guidelines as: “Physically evasive movements to defeat an officer’s attempt at control including bracing, tensing, running away, verbally or physically signaling an intention to avoid or prevent being taken into or retained in custody.”

If this measure were to pass, neither the Police Commission nor the Police Department would be able to amend the policy to further narrow permitted uses of this weapon. Particularly concerning is the idea that people who are signaling an intention to avoid being taken into custody through words alone, could be tasered by the police.

4) The weapon should be described as an “Electronic Control Weapon” and not “Conducted Energy Devices.”

The commonly used term is “Electronic Control Weapon,” as this is used by Department of Justice, and they are classified as “less-lethal,” not “non-lethal.” They are a weapon and they are known to cause injury and death. In addition, they should be described as “weapons that function by firing metal barbs into the skin of the subject, allowing the user to administer an electric shock which can potentially result in injury or death, or incapacitation.”

Therefore, I propose the following language:

“A ‘YES’ Vote Means: If you vote “yes” you want to override current SFPD Taser policy as developed by the Police Commission with stakeholder input, and require that the San Francisco Police Department purchase and maintain Tasers for each police officer, and to authorize officers to use Tasers on those who are actively resisting, assaultive, or exhibiting any action likely to result in serious bodily injury or death, which cannot be changed by the Police Department or Police Commission.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hillary Ronen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Hillary" and last name "Ronen" clearly legible.

Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors