

**THE EFFECTIVE TERM LIMITS INITIATIVE**

SAN FRANCISCO  
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DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

**SECTION 1: Title**

This initiative shall be known and may be cited as “The Effective Term Limits Initiative” (referred to as the “Initiative”).

**SECTION 2: Findings**

The People of the City and County of San Francisco (the “City”) declare as follows.

1. In 1990, the voters approved terms limits for the Board of Supervisors, limiting individuals from serving more than two successive terms in office. The law, however, has a loophole: career politicians can cycle on and off the Board of Supervisors for years, making it hard for others to challenge them. The same loophole exists for the office of Mayor, which is also subject to a limit of two successive terms.
2. Under the current term limits law, career politicians can become entrenched and beholden to special interests. Since incumbents and former officeholders almost always win elections due to their name recognition, these career politicians make it difficult for new leaders, who reflect the varied interests and demographics of our City, to get elected.
3. We need new leaders in San Francisco who are not captive to special interests and the same old battles that have divided our City for decades. We need new leaders who want to work collaboratively to improve our City.
4. We need to establish reasonable and effective term limits that stop career politicians and special interests from running our City, and that strike the right balance between allowing for seasoned leadership while also providing the opportunity for new, effective leaders to emerge.

**SECTION 3: Purposes**

In enacting this Charter amendment, it is the purpose and intent of the people of the City and County of San Francisco to:

1. Encourage qualified candidates to seek public office by placing a reasonable, two-term lifetime limit on the offices of Mayor and Supervisor.
2. Ensure that this reform measure is applied to all former, current, and future officeholders, and that no former or current officeholders unfairly benefit from this measure.
3. Allow current elected officials who have already served two terms, or who are currently serving their second term, to complete their current term of office and allow any person who previously served two terms, and who is elected to office on the date this measure is approved, to

remain in office until a successor chosen at the next general municipal election takes office, in order to facilitate the transition to lifetime term limits by balancing the will of the voters, as expressed in previous elections, with the immediate and pressing need for reform.

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**SECTION 4: Charter Amendment**

The Charter of the City and County of San Francisco is hereby amended to read:

**SEC. 2.101. TERM OF OFFICE.**

*(a) Each member of the Board of Supervisors shall be elected at a general election and shall serve a four-year term commencing on the eighth day in January following election and until a successor qualifies. ~~The respective terms of office of the members of the Board of Supervisors in effect on the date this Charter is adopted shall continue.~~*

*(b) ~~No person elected or appointed as a Supervisor may serve as such a Supervisor for more than two successive four-year terms in his or her lifetime. For purposes of this Section 2.101, a part of a term that exceeds two years shall count as a four-year term; a part of a term that is two years or less shall not. Any person appointed, elected, or any combination thereof to the office of Supervisor to complete in excess of two years of a four-year term shall be deemed, for the purpose of this section, to have served one full term. No person having served two successive four-year terms may serve as a Supervisor, either by election or appointment, until at least four years after the expiration of the second successive term in office. Any Supervisor who resigns with less than two full years remaining until the expiration of the term shall be deemed, for the purposes of this section, to have served a full four-year term. This Section 2.101 shall apply retroactively to any current or former Supervisor except as follows: (1) any person who has served as a Supervisor in excess of the lifetime term limits in this Section 2.101, and who is holding that office on the date this subdivision is approved by the voters, may serve the remainder of that term and, if eligible to serve one additional successive term in that office before this subdivision is approved by the voters, shall remain eligible to serve such additional successive term; and (2) any person who has served as a Supervisor in excess of the lifetime term limits in this Section 2.101, and who is elected to that office on the date this subdivision is approved by the voters, may serve only until a successor, who shall be elected for the remainder of the term at the next general municipal election, takes office on the eighth day in January following that election.~~*

**SEC. 3.101. TERM OF OFFICE.**

*(a) The Mayor shall serve a four-year term.*

*(b) No person shall serve as mayor for more than two successive four-year terms in his or her lifetime. For purposes of this Section 3.101, a part of a term that exceeds two years shall count as a full four-year term; a part of a term that is two years or less shall not. ~~There shall be no limit on the non-successive terms that a person may serve. This Section 3.101 shall apply retroactively to any current or former Mayor, except that any person who has served as Mayor in excess of the lifetime term limits in this Section 3.101, and who is holding that office on the date this subdivision is approved by the voters, may serve the remainder of that term.~~*



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**SECTION 5: Interpretation**

This Initiative shall be interpreted so as to be consistent with all federal and state laws. It is the intent of the voters that the provisions of the Initiative be liberally construed and implemented in a manner that facilitates the purposes set forth in this Initiative.

**SECTION 6: Amendment**

This Initiative may be amended only by a majority of the voters of the City and County of San Francisco.

**SECTION 7: Severability**

If any provision of this Initiative or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this initiative which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this Initiative are severable. In enacting this Initiative, it is the express intent of the voters that, if any provision of this Initiative is held invalid, the remainder of the Initiative shall be given full force and effect.

**SECTION 8: Conflicting Initiatives**

In the event that this Initiative and another measure or measures relating to term limits shall appear on the same City election ballot, the provisions of the other measure or measures shall be deemed to be in conflict with this Initiative. In the event that this Initiative receives a greater number of affirmative votes, the provisions of this Initiative shall prevail in their entirety, and the provisions of the other measure or measures shall be null and void.

**SECTION 9: Legal Challenges**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if the City or any of its officials fails to defend the validity of this Initiative following its approval by the voters, any citizen of the City shall have the authority to intervene in any court action for the purpose of defending the validity of the Initiative, whether such action is in a trial court, on appeal, or on discretionary review by the Supreme Court of California and/or the Supreme Court of the United States. The fees and costs of defending the action shall be a charge on City funds, which shall be satisfied promptly.