



# Guide to Submitting Ballot Arguments

For Local Ballot Measures  
In the San Francisco  
Voter Information Pamphlet

February 15, 2022  
Special Municipal Election

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## Important Dates and Deadlines Related to Ballot Arguments for the February 15, 2022, Special Municipal Election

Calendar Date	Time	E-Date	Event	Code Section
Monday, November 22	11 a.m.	E-85	Designation of Letters for Local Ballot Measures: Paid Arguments may be submitted following Letter Designation	SFMEC §505

### Paid Arguments (300-Word Limit)

Monday, November 29	Noon	E-78	Deadline to submit Paid Ballot Arguments	SFMEC §535(d)
Tuesday, November 30	Noon	E-77	Deadline to correct factual, grammatical, or spelling errors in Paid Arguments	SFMEC §535(f)
Tuesday, November 30 to Friday, December 10	Noon To Noon	E-77 to E-67	Public examination period for Paid Arguments*	SFMEC §590(b)(6)

\*Pursuant to California Elections Code §9295, during the 10-day public examination periods for the above materials for publication in the Voter Information Pamphlet, any San Francisco voter may seek a court order requiring that the material be amended or deleted. A court may amend or delete the material only if the voter demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that the material is false, misleading, or inconsistent with state or local election laws, and that the amendment or deletion will not substantially interfere with the printing or distribution of the Voter Information Pamphlet.

Frequently Used Acronyms	
CAEC	California Elections Code
SFMEC	San Francisco Municipal Elections Code
CA Gov. Code	California Government Code

## I. Introduction

This guide has been prepared by the San Francisco Department of Elections (the Department) to summarize the procedures and requirements for submitting ballot arguments in favor of or against a measure for publication in the San Francisco Voter Information Pamphlet. This guide is intended to answer the most frequent questions about these procedures and requirements. This guide pertains only to local ballot measures for the City and County of San Francisco. State, school, or special district measure arguments are subject to separate requirements as outlined in the California Elections Code (CAEC). If there is a conflict between this guide and an applicable law, regulation, or rule, the law, regulation, or rule shall always apply.

The Department recommends that anyone submitting a ballot argument:

- Carefully proofread the argument and count the words. Argument text will be printed in the Voter Information Pamphlet exactly as submitted. The Department will make the official determinations on word counts for submitted arguments. You may ask the Department to conduct a word count prior to submissions.
- Make an appointment prior to the final submission of their argument using our online appointment form, [sfelections.org/csappt/](https://sfelections.org/csappt/), or by calling the Department at (415) 554-4375.
- Submit the argument before the legal deadline. All signatures and supporting documents must be submitted on or before the deadline.

## II. San Francisco Voter Information Pamphlet

SFMEC Article V

The Department of Elections publishes a Voter Information Pamphlet before each election to provide voters with information about candidates and ballot measures. The Department mails this Voter Information Pamphlet to voters approximately one month before each election. Voters have the option to stop receiving a paper copy and receive a link to the pamphlet by email instead. The Voter Information Pamphlet includes the following:

- A. The sample ballot
- B. The identification of each local measure by letter and title
- C. The digest of each measure, prepared by the Ballot Simplification Committee
- D. The City Attorney's statement or question for each measure
- E. The Controller's financial analysis of each measure
- F. An explanation of how each measure qualified for submission to the voters
- G. The full text of each measure
- H. Proponent, opponent, rebuttal, and paid arguments, if any are submitted, in favor of or against each measure

Prior to submitting arguments, individuals and organizations may review materials such as the Ballot Simplification Committee digest and the financial analysis of the proposed measure, which are available at the Department's office in City Hall, Room 48.

## III. Eligible Authors and Author Information

SFMEC §530(b)

Any of the following may author or co-author ballot arguments in favor of or against any local measure:

- The Board of Supervisors, or any member of the Board of Supervisors authorized by that body
- The Mayor
- Any proponent of an initiative measure or a referendum (the person or people who published the notice of intention to circulate the initiative or referendum petition)
- Any voter who is eligible to vote on the measure, group of such voters, association or organization, or any combination thereof

The Department of Elections must have a signature from each ballot argument author whose name will appear below the text of the argument.

## A. Organizations as Authors

SFMEC §§530(d), 535(a), 575

If an argument is submitted on behalf of an organization, the argument must be signed by a principal officer of the organization who is a registered San Francisco voter. The officer must complete the Author Information portion of the Ballot Argument Control Sheet, and clearly indicate in this section and in the argument text whether the officer's name should be printed as an author in the Voter Information Pamphlet along with the name of the organization.

## B. Author Names, Titles, and Other Identifying Information

SFMEC §530(d)

Authors may include identifying information to be printed along with their names under the ballot argument text. For example, an author may list his or her title, occupation, or affiliation with an organization. (See Section VIII, B(i)2) The names, titles, and other identifying information about authors are counted toward the word limit.

## C. Consent Forms

SFMEC §530(e)

If a ballot argument states that an individual or organization (entity) other than an author supports or opposes the ballot measure, or agrees with or endorses the argument, a completed Consent Form is required. The Consent Form must be signed by the referenced individual or an authorized representative of the referenced organization. **Note:** A copy of a newspaper article may not be substituted for a signed Consent Form.

# IV. Legal Word Limit and Word Count Rules

SFMEC §§550, 575; CAEC §9(a)

Ensure that your argument meets the legal word limit: 300 words for paid arguments.

The following rules govern the word count:

- **Authors:** The names of the authors and any titles or identifying information are counted toward the word limit: "Joe Smith" counts as one word; "Mr. Joe Williams-Smith" also counts as one word.
- **Proper Nouns:** Proper nouns are counted as one word.
- **Geographic Names:** "San Francisco" is counted as one word.
- **Numbers:** Numbers written as numerals are counted as one word: 100. Numbers written as words are counted by the number of words: "one hundred" counts as two words.
- **Dates:** Dates are counted as one word: "June 5, 2018"; "6/5/18"
- **Hyphenated Words:** Word combinations that are hyphenated (and which appear hyphenated in any generally available standard reference dictionary published in the United States in the last 10 calendar years) are counted as one word: one-sided, long-standing, high-speed, low-key
- **Punctuation:** Punctuation is not counted.
- **Acronyms or Initials:** Acronyms or initials count as one word.
- **Abbreviations and contractions:** Abbreviations and contractions count as one word.
- **Internet Website Addresses:** Internet website addresses count as one word.
- **True Source of Funds:** Disclosure of the true source of funds for paid arguments does not count towards the word limit (or for calculation of the publishing fee).

## V. Paid Arguments

SFMEC §§555, 560

Paid arguments are printed in the Voter Information Pamphlet in the order in which the Department receives them. The Department's word count determines the cost of each paid argument. Submitters may arrange a word count prior to formal submission. This will help eliminate any discrepancies in the word count and assist with the calculation of fees.

**The Department strongly recommends submitting ballot arguments before the legal deadline.**

### A. Payment of Fee and Disclosure of True Source of Funds

SFMEC §830

Anyone submitting a paid ballot argument must pay a publication fee of \$200 plus \$2 per word. The fee must be paid when the argument is submitted, and may be paid by personal check, credit or debit card, money order, or cash.

Anyone submitting a paid ballot argument must disclose the true source of funds used for payment of the publication fee. This information will be printed below the paid argument, after the names of the authors, as follows:

The true source(s) of funds for the printing fee of this argument: (insert name).

If the source of the funds used for payment of the fee is a "recipient committee" under the Political Reform Act (CA Gov. Code §82013), the submitter of the ballot argument must disclose the names of the three contributors whose cumulative contributions are the largest contributions received by the committee during the six months immediately preceding submission of the argument.

For more information, contact the San Francisco Ethics Commission at (415) 252-3100 or visit [sfethics.org](http://sfethics.org).

#### i. Definition of a General Recipient Committee

CA Gov. Code §82013

"Committee" means any person or combination of persons who directly or indirectly does any of the following:

- Receives contributions totaling \$2,000 or more in a calendar year
- Makes independent expenditures totaling \$1,000 or more in a calendar year; or
- Makes contributions totaling \$10,000 or more in a calendar year to, or at the behest of, candidates or committees

A person or combination of persons that becomes a committee shall retain its status as a committee until such time as that status is terminated pursuant to CA Gov. Code §84214.

The contributor information will appear below the paid argument as follows:

The three largest contributors to the true source recipient committee:

1. (name of contributor),
2. (name of contributor),
3. (name of contributor)

The true source of funds is not included in the word count.

The Department prints the names of the true source of funds and the recipient committee contributors as they are printed on the control sheet. Please ensure that all information is legible and correct. If necessary, the Department may print shortened names of organizations due to space constraints.

## B. Submission of Petition Signatures in Lieu of Ballot Argument Fee

SFMEC §565, 570, 840

Anyone submitting a ballot argument may submit a petition with signatures of registered San Francisco voters in lieu of the publication fee (“fee petition”). Each valid signature reduces the publication fee by \$0.50.

Each fee petition must include the complete text of the proposed argument and must be submitted in the format prescribed by the Department of Elections. Any registered San Francisco voter may circulate or sign a fee petition, and voters may sign fee petitions for more than one argument related to the same measure. All fee petitions must be submitted when the argument is filed.

## VI. How to Prepare and Submit a Ballot Argument

### A. Consider Your Argument and What Information and Forms You Will Need

- Who will be listed as author(s)?
- Will there be more than one author? If so, you must submit:
  - **Control Sheet A**, with the first author's original signature, and
  - **Control Sheet B**, with the remaining authors' original signatures
- Will an author want to include a title or other identifying information to appear with the argument? (See Section III, B)
- Will an organization be listed as an author? (See Section III, A)
- Will the argument mention anyone other than the authors? If so, you must submit a **Consent Form** with the original signature of the person named in the argument. (See Section III, C)
- What will the argument say? Will the argument and any author information to be printed meet the legal word limit? (See Section IV)
- If it is a paid argument (see section VII):
  - Who is paying for the publication of the argument (true source of funds)?
  - Is the true source of funds a recipient committee? If so, who were the three largest contributors in the past six months?

### B. Prepare the Argument Forms

All ballot argument forms are available online as fillable pdfs at [sfelections.org/arguments](https://sfelections.org/arguments). You can fill in most information online before printing the forms to gather the signatures needed for submission. These forms are also available at the Department's office in City Hall, Room 48.

To maintain an organized, consistent filing process, the Department strongly recommends printing control sheets double sided on legal size paper (8.5" X 14"). This will allow more space for submitters and authors to enter required information legibly. This will also allow Department staff to count the argument's words accurately and print the argument as intended in the Voter Information Pamphlet.

Because anyone listed as an author or mentioned in an argument should have the opportunity to review the argument, the full text of the argument must appear on all Control Sheets and Consent Forms. Any later changes should be noted on Control Sheet A, which is considered the official submission for publication.

To ensure that all information on your ballot argument forms is clear and legible, neatly type your forms. Handwritten submissions or corrections are more difficult to read and interpret than those that are typed. If handwritten information or a revision is unclear, Department staff will interpret the handwritten information to the best of their abilities; this interpretation is final.



## i. **Control Sheets A and B**

**Control Sheet A** must be submitted for every ballot argument, with required signatures and information related to the type of argument, the first author, the submitter, and, for paid arguments, the source of payment.

If your argument has more than one author, you must also submit **Control Sheet B**, with required signatures and information related to the additional authors.

### **Argument Information (Section 1)**

Indicate which type of argument you are submitting and for what measure (by letter).

### **Author Information (Section 2)**

Author Information is printed in italics below the argument in the Voter Information Pamphlet.

For each author, provide a name, San Francisco residential address, and an original signature (see below for organizations). Indicate whether the author is an organization or an individual, and how the author's information should be printed below the argument; also show in the argument text how the author's information should be printed.

**An argument submitted on behalf of an organization** must be signed by a principal officer of the organization, who must be a registered San Francisco voter. The officer must clearly indicate in this section and in the argument text whether the names of both the officer and the organization or only the organization should be listed as author in the Voter Information Pamphlet.

**Authors may include identifying information**, such as titles, occupations, or affiliation with an organization, to be printed with their names. Clearly indicate the title or other identifying information in this section and in the argument text.

If an author includes a title or other information only for identification, and not to indicate the support of his or her organization, mark this box in this section:

- Check if the title or identifying information is for identification purposes only, if you are signing as an individual and not on behalf of an organization.

If this box is checked, the author's identifying information will be marked with an asterisk and the following disclaimer will be printed in the Voter Information Pamphlet:

\*For identification purposes only; author is signing as an individual and not on behalf of an organization.

Author names, titles, and other identifying information are counted toward the word limit; however, "for identification only" disclaimers are not counted.

If the author information provided in this section differs from the author information in the argument text, the Voter Information Pamphlet will reflect the information in the argument text. However, an asterisk and a "for identification only" disclaimer will be added for any author who checked the related box in this section, even if this information is not specified in the argument text.

### **Submitter Information (Control Sheet A, Section 3)**

The submitter is the person who delivers the argument and supporting materials to the Department; this may be the author or someone else. The submitter must complete this section. If there is a question or issue with a submission, the Department will contact the submitter.

### **Argument Text (Control Sheet A, Section 5; Control Sheet B; Section 3)**

The text of your argument will be printed exactly as submitted in this section. Argument text on all required forms should match that on Control Sheet A.

#### **To request text formatting**

You may request that specific argument text be printed in bold, italic, or bold italic type. Other special formatting, such as underlining or use of graphics, columns, or other unusual spacing, is not permitted.

On Control Sheet A, request formatting of argument text by:

Typing your argument text with the desired formatting (bold, italics, or bold italics); any bolding should be dark enough to show in photocopies or clearly indicating as follows on Control Sheet A, Section 5:

Underline the argument text to be formatted

In the left column, mark “B” for bold, “I” for italics, or “BI” for bold italics.

To indicate more than one format within a line of text, list the format codes in order, separated by commas  
Information for Paid Arguments

### **Information for Paid Arguments (Control Sheet A, Section 4)**

For paid arguments, the Voter Information Pamphlet must include information about the source of funds for publication of the argument. This information is printed below the argument and the author information. In this section, indicate the true source of funds for the publication of your argument. Mark “Yes” or “No” to indicate whether the true source of funds is a recipient committee. If so, list the three largest monetary contributors in the last six months (see Section VII). The submitter must sign this statement under penalty of perjury.

The Department prints the names of the true source of funds and the recipient committee contributors as they are submitted in this section; all information must be correct and legible. If necessary, the Department may print shortened names of organizations due to space constraints.

#### **To submit multiple paid arguments, save time and effort:**

- (1) Fill out *one* Control Sheet A with all *unchanging information* for your arguments—usually Sections 1 (Argument Information), 3 (Submitter Information), and 4 (Information for Paid Arguments)—and leave the other sections blank. Save or print the form. This file or printed document is your template for all of your arguments.
- (2) Using your template, create Control Sheet A for each argument. Add the *unique information* for each argument—usually Sections 2 (Author Information) and 5 (Argument Text)—to your template. Print and save Control Sheet A for each argument.
- (3) For each argument, fill out Control Sheet B and Consent Forms as needed. Because most information on these forms is unique for each argument and electronic copies of these forms are not needed, there is no need to create templates for Control Sheet B or Consent Forms. However, for clarity, copy and paste the text from Control Sheet A to Control Sheet B.
- (4) For each argument, collect all required signatures on Control Sheet A, and, if needed, on Control Sheet B or a Consent Form.
- (5) Submit completed Control Sheets and Consent Forms to the Department of Elections, and send electronic copies of the argument text to [publications@sfgov.org](mailto:publications@sfgov.org) within 24 hours.

## ii. Consent Form

Required only if someone who is not an author is referenced in the argument. (See Section III, C)

If your ballot argument states that an individual or organization (entity) other than an author supports or opposes the ballot measure, or agrees with or endorses the argument, you must submit a Consent Form signed by the referenced individual or an authorized representative of the referenced organization.

**Note:** You may not substitute a copy of a newspaper article for a signed Consent Form.

## C. Submit the Ballot Argument to the Department of Elections

All forms, signatures, and supporting documents are due by noon on the legal deadline for the type of argument. The Department strongly encourages you to submit your arguments before the deadline and to make an appointment prior to the final submission using our online appointment form, [sfelections.org/csappt](https://sfelections.org/csappt), or by calling the Department at (415) 554-4375.

### Send an electronic copy of argument text

Save taxpayer dollars, facilitate typesetting, and reduce the possibility of a transcription error by sending an electronic copy of your ballot argument text within 24 hours after submission to the Department at [publications@sfgov.org](mailto:publications@sfgov.org). If you do not send a timely electronic copy, Department staff will need to type your argument to meet Voter Information Pamphlet production timelines.

- Use a format that allows the text to be copied and pasted, such as a Microsoft Word, PDF attachment, or copy text into the body of an email; please do not send a scan.
- Use a descriptive subject line and file names, such as “No on B – 12 to 15.”
- If there is any discrepancy between the electronic copy and the official argument submission on Control Sheet A, the Department will print the version that you officially submitted on Control Sheet A; any allowable corrections must be submitted in person
- Sending an electronic copy of argument text is in addition to the official, in-person submission of the signed argument on Control Sheet A, with any other required documentation; the Department will not print arguments that are emailed or faxed only

## D. After Submission of Your Ballot Argument

### i. Modification or Withdrawal of Ballot Arguments; Correction of Grammatical, Spelling, or Factual Errors

The author of a ballot argument may change or withdraw the argument, or withdraw his or her name or signature authorization, up until the submission deadline for that argument.

After the submission deadline, authors may correct only grammatical, spelling, or factual errors, up until the correction deadline for that argument. The Department of Elections determines what constitutes a grammatical, spelling, or factual error, and this determination is final.

To change, withdraw, or correct an argument, the author must submit a signed statement that clearly indicates the change, withdrawal, or correction. For some changes or corrections, the Department may require the submitter to amend or complete a new Control Sheet.

### ii. Notice of Defective Submission

If there are any issues with an argument submission, such as missing information or fee underpayment, the Department will notify the submitter. The Department will allow submitters 24 hours from notification to rectify any issues. Depending on the issue, the Department may strike names from arguments if author signatures or consent forms are missing. An argument may also be ruled defective if there are underpaid fees or the submitter fails to reduce a word count to meet the legal limit.

### **iii. Public Review and Challenges to Ballot Arguments**

The 10-day public examination period for ballot arguments begins at noon on the day following the submission deadline. Copies of all ballot argument materials to be printed in the Voter Information Pamphlet will be available for public examination at the Department's office in City Hall, Room 48, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Any challenge to a ballot argument must be submitted in writing to the Department of Elections prior to the close of the public examination period.

### **iv. Publication and Mailing of the Voter Information Pamphlet**

The Voter Information Pamphlet is mailed to all registered voters no later than 29 days before the election. It is available at [sfelections.org](http://sfelections.org) shortly before it is mailed.