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About the Ballot Simplification Committee

Upcoming election: June 8, 2010 Consolidated Statewide Direct Primary Election

Meetings begin: Tuesday, March 2, 2010

Completion deadline: Monday, March 15, 2010

Meeting agendas and other materials will be available on the Department of Elections website, www.sfelections.org/bsc, and in our office in City Hall, Room 48. Agendas will be posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting, as mandated by the Sunshine Ordinance. Other meeting materials will be made available as early as possible. Please check often for any updates.

The Ballot Simplification Committee works in public meetings to prepare a fair and impartial summary of each local ballot measure in simple language. These summaries, or "digests," are printed in San Francisco's Voter Information Pamphlet, which is mailed to every registered voter before the election.

Each digest must explain the primary purposes and points of the measure, but is not required to include auxiliary or subsidiary information. Each digest must include the following four sections:

- *The Way It Is Now*
- *The Proposal*
- *A "Yes" Vote Means*
- *A "No" Vote Means*

In general, each digest is limited to 300 words. Digests may exceed the 300-word limit if the Committee determines that the complexity or scope of the proposed measure requires a longer digest. In addition, digests must be written as close as possible to the eighth-grade reading level.

The Ballot Simplification Committee also assists the Department of Elections in preparing other informational material for the Voter Information Pamphlet, such as a glossary of the terms that appear in the pamphlet.

The Ballot Simplification Committee is responsible only for the digests, glossary of terms, and certain other informational material in the Voter Information Pamphlet. The City Attorney prepares the ballot questions and the Director of Elections determines the titles of propositions.

The Ballot Simplification Committee must complete its work no fewer than 85 days before the election.

How the Ballot Simplification Committee Works

The Deputy City Attorney assigned to the Ballot Simplification Committee prepares a preliminary draft digest of each proposition. During their public meeting, the Committee edits and amends that digest. During this process, the Committee occasionally solicits information from City staff with expertise in the subject matter or from the drafters of the proposition. Other public comment is not permitted during this phase of the Committee's work.

When the Committee has agreed upon a draft digest, it opens the meeting to comments and suggestions from the public. Each speaker is generally permitted three minutes. The Committee respectfully requests that comments be limited to specific points concerning the language of the draft, and not be argumentative or repeat the suggestions of others.

After all members of the public who wish to comment on the digest have been heard, the Committee considers each of the comments and suggestions and decides whether to amend the draft digest. The Committee then votes to adopt the digest. At least three votes are required to adopt a digest.

Procedure for Reconsideration of Digests

Following adoption of a digest by the Ballot Simplification Committee, any person may request that the Committee reconsider the digest by submitting a written Request for Reconsideration to the Department of Elections. The request must indicate the specific language in the digest that the requestor wants to amend, what alternate language the requestor recommends, and the reasons for that recommendation. Because the Committee must, by law, complete its work no later than 85 days before the election, **Requests for Reconsideration must be submitted within 24 hours of adoption of the digest.** Each digest will be posted as soon as possible after adoption at www.sfelections.org/bsc, with the deadline for Requests for Reconsideration.

Please address any Requests for Reconsideration as follows:

E-mail: publications@sfgov.org

Fax: 415-554-7257

Hand Delivery: Ballot Simplification Committee – Request for Reconsideration,
C/o Barbara Carr, Department of Elections, City Hall, Room 48

Upon receipt of a Request for Reconsideration, the Committee deliberates and votes on whether to reconsider its digest. If the Committee decides to reconsider the digest language, it does so at that time. The Committee may or may not change the language of the digest. After this reconsideration, the Committee again opens the meeting to comments and suggestions from the public. The Committee then considers those comments and suggestions, decides whether or not to amend, and votes to adopt a final digest. The Committee's decisions concerning Requests for Reconsideration are final.

Committee Members

The Ballot Simplification Committee consists of five voting members, each of whom must be a San Francisco resident and registered voter. The voting members are selected as follows:

- the Board of Supervisors appoints three:
 - two must be nominated by either the Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences or the Northern California Broadcasters Association.
 - one must be nominated by the League of Women Voters of San Francisco.
- the Mayor appoints two:
 - one must be nominated by the Northern California Media Workers Guild (formerly Northern California Newspaper Guild.)
 - one must be an educational reading specialist recommended by the Superintendent of Schools of the San Francisco Unified School District.

The City Attorney or his or her representative serves as a non-voting *ex officio* member. The Committee's work is administered by the Department of Elections.

The current members of the Committee are:

Betty Packard, Chair

Nominated by the Northern California Broadcasters Association/California Press Women
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors

June Fraps

Nominated by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors

Ann Jorgensen

Nominated by the San Francisco Unified School District
Appointed by the Mayor

Adele Fasick

Nominated by the League of Women Voters
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors

Christine Unruh

Nominated by the California Media Workers Guild
Appointed by the Mayor