

June 17, 2020

FROM: Chris Jerdonek (Elections Commission)
TO: Elections Commission;
John Arntz, Director of Elections

SUBJECT: Memo re: Odd-year Elections and Election Consolidation

This memo contains some information I collected since the last Commission meeting about San Francisco's odd-year Mayoral election, as compared with its even-year elections.

Background

At last month's Elections Commission meeting, in response to learning about Mayor Breed's request for Departmental budget cuts, I asked about the possibility of consolidating San Francisco's odd-year Mayoral elections with its even-year elections.

Director Arntz estimated this could save the City between five and seven million dollars every four years. Deputy City Attorney Maldonado said this would require a Charter amendment.

SB 415 – The California Voter Participation Rights Act

In 2015, the California Legislature passed SB 415 ("The California Voter Participation Rights Act"). SB 415 prohibits a jurisdiction in California from holding a regular election separate from California's statewide elections if the voter turnout for such an election "is at least 25 percent less than the average voter turnout within that political subdivision for the previous four statewide general elections":

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB415

In July 2017, State Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued a legal opinion stating that the California Voter Participation Rights Act applies to charter cities:

<https://oag.ca.gov/opinions/search?combine=16-603>

San Francisco Voter Turnout

The following tables show the voter turnout for San Francisco's most recent off-year Mayoral election (November 2019), compared with the voter turnout in San Francisco for the four previous statewide general elections (both June and November, as well as November-only).

The turnout for the November 2019 election is from the Department's results page for that election:

<https://sfelections.sfgov.org/november-5-2019-election-results-summary>

Turnout figures for elections prior to November 2019 are from the Department's Historical Voter Turnout page:

<https://sfelections.sfgov.org/historical-voter-turnout>

	Turnout	Comments
November 2018	74.49%	
June 2018	52.61%	
November 2016	80.71%	
June 2016	56.59%	
Average of the four above	66.10%	
25% less than the average	49.58%	
November 2019	41.64%	37.0% less than the average

Table 1: Voter turnout of San Francisco's most recent odd-year mayoral election compared with the voter turnout in San Francisco of the previous four June and November statewide elections.

	Turnout	Comments
November 2018	74.49%	
November 2016	80.71%	
November 2014	53.03%	
November 2012	72.56%	
Average of the four above	70.20%	
25% less than the average	52.65%	
November 2019	41.64%	40.7% less than the average

Table 2: Voter turnout of San Francisco's most recent odd-year mayoral election compared with the voter turnout in San Francisco of the previous four November statewide elections.