

July 12, 2022

San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place,  
City Hall, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689



**Re: File # 220638; Charter Amendment - City Elections in Even-Numbered Years**

Dear Members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

On behalf of California Common Cause, please accept this letter which includes our insights regarding the proposed charter amendment to be submitted to the voters that would amend the Charter of the City and County of San Francisco to change the election cycle for the offices of Mayor, Sheriff, District Attorney, City Attorney and Treasurer so that these offices will be elected in even-numbered years.

California Common Cause has not formally endorsed the proposed charter amendment. However, on principle, we support efforts that will make elections more inclusive and representative. Until our board approves a position, we would like to share our insights on the experience of similar reforms:

In 2015 California Common Cause was the lead supporter of SB 415, the California Voter Participation Rights Act which sought to remedy the persistent problem of low voter turnout in critically important local elections, which often happened on off-cycle dates.<sup>1</sup> SB 415 added a mandate to the elections code that cities consolidate local elections with state and federal elections if those off-cycle elections resulted in turnout that was 25 percent or more lower than voter turnout for the previous four statewide general elections.<sup>2</sup>

In support of SB 415, California Common Cause cited a Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) survey of 350 California cities that found that simply moving an election to be synchronized with the even-year state elections can result in a 21-36 percent boost in voter turnout for municipal and other local elections.<sup>3</sup> However, the impact was much more profound.

In 2021, we conducted a study of elections that occurred between 2012-2020 and found that 54 cities that moved their off-cycle elections to even years between 2016-2020 tripled their voter participation in municipal elections. The average off-cycle registered voter turnout in these cities, prior to their switch, was 25.54%. The average on-cycle registered voter turnout, after their switch, was 75.81%.<sup>4</sup> The study showed that the increase in votes cast significantly outpaced growth in voter registration.

We hope that these insights are helpful as you consider the proposed ballot measure. Please feel free to contact me at [phernandez@commoncause.org](mailto:phernandez@commoncause.org) or (415) 613-2363 if you have any inquiries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pedro Hernandez", written over a white background.

Pedro Hernandez  
Legal and Policy Director

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<sup>1</sup> SB 415 (Hueso), 2015-16, available at [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160SB415](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB415).

<sup>2</sup> Cal. Elec. Code §14050-14057. Note, in *City of Redondo Beach v. Padilla*, 46 Cal.App.5th 902 (2020), the Court of Appeals determined that the law did not apply to charter cities. However, San Jose, a charter city, recently passed a similar measure.

<sup>3</sup> California Common Cause, SB 415 Letter of Support, April, 2015, available at <https://www.commoncause.org/california/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2018/05/sb-415.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Alvin Valverde Meneses and Eric Spencer, *Consolidation of Elections in California Creates Massive Gains in Local Voter Turnout*, California Common Cause, Feb. 2021, available at <https://www.commoncause.org/california/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2021/02/Consolidation-of-Elections-Creates-Massive-Gains-in-Local-Voter-Turnout.pdf>.

**From:** [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#)  
**To:** [Young, Victor \(BOS\)](#); [Calvillo, Angela \(BOS\)](#); [De Asis, Edward \(BOS\)](#); [Entezari, Mehran \(BOS\)](#); [Mchugh, Eileen \(BOS\)](#); [Ng, Wilson \(BOS\)](#); [Somera, Alisa \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: 2024 Mayoral et al election  
**Date:** Thursday, July 14, 2022 11:45:22 AM

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John Bullock  
Office of the Clerk of the Board  
San Francisco Board of Supervisor  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-5184  
[BOS@sfgov.org](mailto:BOS@sfgov.org) | [www.sfbos.org](http://www.sfbos.org)

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**From:** Lee Heidhues <leerosh@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 12, 2022 5:33 PM  
**To:** Chan, Connie (BOS) <connie.chan@sfgov.org>; Preston, Dean (BOS) <dean.preston@sfgov.org>; Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>; Mar, Gordon (BOS) <gordon.mar@sfgov.org>; Ronen, Hillary <hillary.ronen@sfgov.org>; Walton, Shamann (BOS) <shamann.walton@sfgov.org>; Dorsey, Matt (BOS) <matt.dorsey@sfgov.org>; Stefani, Catherine (BOS) <catherine.stefani@sfgov.org>; Mandelman, Rafael (BOS) <rafael.mandelman@sfgov.org>; Safai, Ahsha (BOS) <ahsha.safai@sfgov.org>; Melgar, Myrna (BOS) <Myrna.Melgar@sfgov.org>  
**Cc:** Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>  
**Subject:** 2024 Mayoral et al election

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Supervisors

You must stand Tall for Democracy and ignore Mayor Breed's absurd attack on her political foes by placing the measure on the November ballot.

The ballot measure to align the Mayoral, DA and City Attorney election with the

Presidential election.

Breed's efforts to quash this proposal is nothing more than thinly disguised Voter suppression.

Do the Right Thing.

Lee Heidhues