

From: [David O'Brien](#)
To: [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#); [Chan, Connie \(BOS\)](#); [Stefani, Catherine \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#); [Mar, Gordon \(BOS\)](#); [Preston, Dean \(BOS\)](#); [Dorsey, Matt \(BOS\)](#); [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [Mandelman, Rafael \(BOS\)](#); [Ronen, Hillary](#); [Walton, Shamann \(BOS\)](#); [Safai, Ahsha \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Caroline Joseph](#); [Calvillo, Angela \(BOS\)](#); [Somera, Alisa \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Letter in Support of Proposed Charter Amendment (File No. 220638)
Date: Monday, July 18, 2022 2:49:21 PM
Attachments: [San Francisco Charter Amendment RepresentUs Letter of Support.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

Please find attached RepresentUs' letter in support of the proposed charter amendment to move local elections to even years. Thank you very much for your attention.

David O'Brien
Policy Counsel
dobrien@represent.us



July 18, 2022

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

Re: Charter Amendment – City Elections in Even-Numbered Years (File No. 220638)

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing on behalf of RepresentUs to express our enthusiastic support for the proposed charter amendment to move San Francisco’s municipal elections to even-numbered years and readjust the signature threshold for voter initiatives (File No. 220638). RepresentUs is a nonpartisan election reform organization that seeks to dismantle the root causes of inequality in our democracy and end political corruption, extremism, and gridlock. RepresentUs is involved in efforts around the country to defend the integrity of the democratic process.

Consolidating local elections with even-year elections is a proven and commonsense way to improve turnout and save money. The evidence is overwhelming that holding municipal elections leads to significantly higher voter turnout.¹ Cities across California have experienced drastic increases in voter turnout after switching to even-year elections, and San Francisco *already* has much higher voter turnout for state and federal elections held on even years than it does in local elections.² In addition to turnout increases, consolidating elections makes financial sense. Research shows that cities using odd-year municipal elections spend significantly more per voter on elections than cities that consolidate local races with even-year elections.³

Voter participation is a complex issue that involves many different factors. It is rare to find a single change that directly and unambiguously creates an immediate and significant improvement in voter turnout. It is almost impossible to find a single change that causes such drastic increases in turnout while simultaneously saving money. Consolidating local elections to even years is essentially a public policy unicorn.

Our democracy faces grave challenges as efforts to roll back ballot access and undermine voting rights are rising across the country. San Francisco has the opportunity to be a national

¹ See, e.g., Marschall, Melissa, and John Lappie. “Turnout in Local Elections: Is Timing Really Everything?” *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 17.3 (2018): 221-233; Berry, C. R. & Gersen, J. E., “The Timing of Elections,” 77 *U. Chi. Law Rev.* 37 (2010); Hajnal, Z. and Lewis, P. 2003. “Municipal Institutions and Voter Turnout in Local Elections.” *Urban Affairs Review* 38(May): 645–68.

² Alvin Valverde Meneses and Eric Spencer, *Consolidation of Elections in California Creates Massive Gains in Local Voter Turnout*, California Common Cause (February 2021).

³ Jose P. Hernandez, *RESEARCH BRIEF: Odd-Year vs. Even-Year Consolidated Elections in California*, The Greenlining Institute (October 2013).



leader in the fight to defend democratic values and encourage voter participation. We strongly encourage the Board of Supervisors to send this charter amendment to the ballot this Fall and let the voters decide for themselves.

Sincerely,

David O'Brien
Policy Counsel

Caroline Joseph
Research Analyst

From: [susan.stearn](#)
To: [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Charter Amendment
Date: Monday, July 18, 2022 4:11:30 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

I am writing in support of Supervisor Dean Preston's proposal of a charter amendment that would move our local elections to the same time as the state and federal elections. Statistics show that this would increase voter participation significantly at the local level. Easy fix. I cannot think of any good reason why this amendment should be opposed, in that making it easier for our citizens to participate in government is what it's all about.

Thank you,

Susan E. Stearn
535 Clayton St.
SF, CA 94117
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Pedro Hernandez](#)
To: [Chan, Connie \(BOS\)](#); [Stefani, Catherine \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#); [Mar, Gordon \(BOS\)](#); [Preston, Dean \(BOS\)](#); [Dorsey, Matt \(BOS\)](#); [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [Mandelman, Rafael \(BOS\)](#); [Ronen, Hillary](#); [Walton, Shamann \(BOS\)](#); [Safai, Ahsha \(BOS\)](#); [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Re: California Common Cause Letter re: Even Year Elections Charter Amendment
Date: Monday, July 18, 2022 4:38:30 PM
Attachments: [20220718 CACC Support Letter re Even Year Charter Amendment.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Attached please find our updated letter which reflects California Common Cause's support for the proposed charter amendment for even year elections.

Please feel free to contact me at phernandez@commoncause.org or (415) 613-2363 if you have any inquiries.

Sincerely,
Pedro Hernandez

From: Pedro Hernandez
Sent: Tuesday, July 12, 2022 5:47 PM
To: connie.chan@sfgov.org <connie.chan@sfgov.org>; catherine.stefani@sfgov.org <catherine.stefani@sfgov.org>; aaron.peskin@sfgov.org <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>; gordon.mar@sfgov.org <gordon.mar@sfgov.org>; dean.preston@sfgov.org <dean.preston@sfgov.org>; matt.dorsey@sfgov.org <matt.dorsey@sfgov.org>; myrna.melgar@sfgov.org <myrna.melgar@sfgov.org>; rafael.mandelman@sfgov.org <rafael.mandelman@sfgov.org>; hillary.ronen@sfgov.org <hillary.ronen@sfgov.org>; shamann.walton@sfgov.org <shamann.walton@sfgov.org>; ahsha.safai@sfgov.org <ahsha.safai@sfgov.org>; Board.of.Supervisors@sfgov.org <Board.of.Supervisors@sfgov.org>
Subject: California Common Cause Letter re: Even Year Elections Charter Amendment

Attached please find our letter regarding the proposed ballot measure to 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.

Please feel free to contact me at phernandez@commoncause.org or (415) 613-2363 if you have any inquiries.

Best,

Pedro Hernandez (*he/him*)
Legal and Policy Director, California Common Cause
phone: 415-613-2363
web: commoncause.org/ca

July 18, 2022

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



Re: File # 220638; Item 37 on July 12, 2022 BOS Agenda
Charter Amendment - City Elections in Even-Numbered Years - SUPPORT

Dear Members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

On behalf of California Common Cause, we are proud to support 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. Please accept this letter to reflect our support of the measure.

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.¹ 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.²

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.³ 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%.⁴ The study showed that the increase in votes cast significantly outpaced growth in voter registration.

Our research makes clear that consolidating elections with statewide elections will help more voters participate in important local elections that impact the well-being of the city.

We hope that these insights are helpful as you consider the proposed ballot measure. Please feel free to contact me at 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 horizontal line.

Pedro Hernandez
Legal and Policy Director

¹ SB 415 (Hueso), 2015-16, available at https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB415.

² 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.

³ 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>.

⁴ 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: [Sietse Goffard](#)
To: [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Asian Law Caucus letter on election charter amendment
Date: Monday, July 18, 2022 5:32:29 PM
Attachments: [Asian Law Caucus - Voter Participation Act Letter.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear SF Board of Supervisors,

The Asian Law Caucus would like to respectfully submit this letter in support of the proposed charter amendment (file # 220638) to adjust the election timeline for citywide offices. Our voting rights team has taken time to analyze the topic and look at existing research. We believe that the measure would lead to meaningful improvements in voter participation and inclusive democracy in San Francisco, and that the long-term benefits for civic participation would outweigh the short-term costs of adjusting the election calendar.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share our perspective on this topic.

Best,
Sietse Goffard

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Sietse Goffard
Senior Voting Rights Coordinator
Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
+1 (857) 500-2437 | sietseg@advancingjustice-alc.org



July 18, 2022

Dear San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus wishes to express its support for the Voter Participation Act. Our Voting Rights team has analyzed the proposal and studied existing research on the topic. We believe that the proposed changes would lead to meaningful improvements in voter participation, civic engagement, and inclusive democracy in the city.

Consolidating local elections to even-year schedules would significantly increase voter turnout in future municipal elections. A recent study by California Common Cause found that when dozens of cities switched their elections from “off-cycle” to “on-cycle” after the passage of SB 415, voter turnout in municipal elections tripled, rising from an average of approximately 25% to 75%.¹ San Francisco would likely see similarly large gains if the Voter Participation Act were implemented. Turnout in odd-year municipal elections hovers at just 40-45%. By shifting San Francisco’s municipal elections to even years only, the city would reduce voter fatigue and boost voter engagement significantly.

Just as importantly, this reform would result in voter turnouts that are not only larger in size, but also more fully representative of San Francisco’s population. Research shows that in even years, turnout is more diverse and includes more voters who are working class, young, limited English proficient, and racial/ethnic minorities.² In odd-year elections, these communities often get left out. The Voter Participation Act would be a big step forward in building a more inclusive democracy in San Francisco.

We acknowledge that synchronizing the election calendar to an even-year schedule would have impacts on upcoming citywide races, including the mayoral race, as well as certain bond measures. However, we believe that the tremendous gains to voter participation and democratic inclusion for years to come will outweigh these relatively short-term drawbacks.

Thank you for considering our perspective. Please feel free to contact us with any questions about our position or research on this topic.

Sincerely,

Sietse Goffard
Senior Voting Rights Program Coordinator
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus

¹ Alvin Valverde Meneses and Eric Spencer. “Consolidation of Elections in California Creates Massive Gains in Local Voter Turnout.” *California Common Cause* (Feb 2021). [Link](#).

² Michael Hartney and Sam Hayes. “Off-Cycle and Out of Sync: How Election Timing Influences Political Representation.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* (2021), 0, 1–20. [Link](#).