LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

(Second Draft, dated 1/14/2016)

[Charter Amendment - Mayoral Run-Off Election Following Ranked-Choice Voting]

Describing and setting forth a proposal to the voters at an election to be held on June 7, 2016, to amend the Charter of the City and County of San Francisco to provide for a run-off election for Mayor between the top two candidates selected through ranked-choice voting unless one candidate receives a majority of first choices.

Existing Law

The City uses ranked-choice voting, also referred to as instant-runoff voting, to elect its Mayor, City Attorney, District Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff, Assessor-Recorder, Treasurer, and members of the Board of Supervisors. In ranked-choice voting, voters may select up to the three candidates for a single office in order of preference. Under ranked-choice voting, the winning candidate is the one who receives the highest-level of support from the greatest number of voters.

The City's ranked-choice voting system does not employ run-off elections.

Amendments to Current Law

The proposed Charter amendment would replace the City's single-stage, ranked-choice voting system for Mayor with a two-stage, run-off election system that incorporates ranked-choice voting. The proposal would not affect other offices currently subject to ranked-choice voting elections.

In the first stage, all mayoral candidates would participate in a ranked-choice voting election, generally to be held on the Tuesday immediately following the first Monday in November. If a candidate receives a majority of the first-choice selections at that election, that candidate shall be declared the winner of the election. If not, the City will use ranked-choice voting to determine which two candidates received the greatest level of support. Those two candidates will then proceed to the second stage of the process.

At the second stage, the two remaining candidates will proceed to a run-off election, generally to be held on the second Tuesday of the following December. The candidate that receives the majority of votes cast at the run-off will be declared the winner of the election.

Supervisor Avalos
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The proposal provides that in any potential run-offs, voters may not cast votes for write-in candidates for Mayor. The proposal also specifies that ballot measures may not be submitted to the voters at a run-off election.

Background Information

On March 5, 2002, the voters approved Proposition A, establishing a ranked-choice voting system to elect the City's Mayor, City Attorney, District Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff, Assessor-Recorder, Treasurer, and members of the Board of Supervisors. The City first used ranked-choice voting to elect its local officials in November 2004.

Proposition A also eliminated the prior, two-stage voting system for City elective offices. Before November 2004, if a candidate for Mayor, Sheriff, District Attorney, City Attorney, Treasurer, Assessor-Recorder, Public Defender or member of the Board of Supervisors failed to receive a majority of the votes at a general municipal election, the two candidates receiving the most votes would proceed to a runoff election. Any run-off election held for Mayor, Sheriff, District Attorney, City Attorney, Treasurer or member of the Board of Supervisors was held the second Tuesday of December. And any run-off election held for Assessor-Recorder and Public Defender was held at the next general election.

This legislative digest reflects amendments made by the Rules Committee on January 14, 2016. On that day, the Committee duplicated the original file and amended the duplicate file to remove all changes to the vacancy appointments process. This legislative digest accompanies the duplicated file.

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