

# San Mateo County

## Measure B

Shall the San Mateo County Charter be amended so that each member of the Board of Supervisors will cease to be elected by an at-large vote of all the voters in the County, but is instead elected only by the voters of his or her district?

### Full Text

Shall Section 202 of the County Charter be amended to read as follows:

#### 202. Election.

Supervisors are elected by district. The five supervisorial districts shall be apportioned by ordinance pursuant to general law.

Candidates for the office of Supervisor shall be electors in the district which they seek to represent. If a Supervisor ceases to reside in that district, the seat becomes vacant.

Except as otherwise provided in this Charter, Supervisors shall be nominated and elected pursuant to general law for a term of four years. Supervisors shall not be eligible for election to nor serve more than three consecutive terms in office.

### Impartial Analysis of Measure B

This measure, placed on the ballot by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, would amend the San Mateo County Charter. Section 102 of the San Mateo County Charter provides that any amendment to the County Charter passes if a majority of those voting on the measure vote for it.

Section 202 of the San Mateo County Charter presently states that all members of San Mateo County's governing body, the Board of Supervisors, are elected "at large." This means that all registered voters in the County may vote for a candidate to fill each seat on the Board of Supervisors when the seat is up for election. This is true even though each seat on the Board of Supervisors is associated with one of five specific geographic districts. Stated differently, voters from across the County may vote on each Board seat, regardless of the supervisorial district in which the voter lives or the district associated with that seat.

This measure would amend Section 202 of the Charter to provide that each of the five seats on the Board of Supervisors would be elected "by district," meaning that only registered voters residing in a specific supervisorial district would be permitted to vote for a candidate to fill the seat representing that district. County voters who are not registered to vote in a given district would no longer be able to vote on candidates for a seat on the Board of Supervisors for that specific district.

This measure would not change the existing requirement that each candidate for the Board of Supervisors be registered to vote in the district for which the candidate seeks to be elected, and it would not change the rule that renders a seat on the Board of Supervisors vacant if the Board member for that district no longer resides in that district. This measure would also not change the four-year term length for members of the Board of Supervisors or the term limitation of three consecutive terms.

A "yes" vote on this measure would amend Section 202 of the San Mateo County Charter such that each member of the County of San Mateo Board of Supervisors would be elected by district rather than at large.

A "no" vote on this measure would leave Section 202 of the San Mateo County Charter unchanged, keeping the at large election for members of the County Board of Supervisors.

This measure passes if a majority of those voting on the measure vote "yes."

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Arguments in support of or in opposition to the proposed laws are the opinions of the authors.

Argument in Favor of Measure B	Rebuttal to Argument in Favor of Measure B
<p>Of the 58 counties in California, only San Mateo County elects its Board of Supervisors in countywide elections. Every other county elects supervisors by district. District elections result in more competition, more accountability, more citizen involvement, and lower costs to taxpayers.</p> <p>Countywide elections favor politically connected and well-funded candidates and incumbents. Why? With over 330,000 voters in San Mateo County, a supervisor campaign is a daunting and expensive proposition as it is similar in scope to running for Congress. As a result, the vast majority of San Mateo County supervisor races are uncontested or uncompetitive.</p> <p>With district elections, approximately 66,000 voters in each of the county's five supervisorial districts could choose their supervisor. That would attract more candidates to run as they could mount grass roots campaigns without having to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars. It would also increase the likelihood that the diversity of the county would be reflected on the Board of Supervisors.</p> <p>District elections allow voters to hold incumbents accountable. With countywide elections that is all but impossible. In fact, over the last 30 years no incumbent supervisor has ever lost when standing for reelection.</p> <p>District elections bring government and democracy closer to home and would provide San Mateo County voters with more say in their county government and increase awareness of county issues. This is badly needed as today county government is largely invisible to the public despite a \$1.8 billion dollar budget and responsibility for a multitude of critical services</p> <p>Finally, when a special election is held to fill a vacant supervisor seat, as has occurred three times since 1993, with district elections many hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars would be saved.</p> <p>In 2009 the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury issued a strong recommendation in support of district elections.</p> <p>Empower voters. Vote <b>YES</b> on Measure B.</p> <p>For more information, see:  <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/sanmateocountyfairelections/">https://sites.google.com/site/sanmateocountyfairelections/</a></p> <p>/s/ <b>Dave Pine</b> August 15, 2012 San Mateo County Supervisor</p> <p>/s/ <b>Dave Warden</b> August 12, 2012 Mayor, City of Belmont</p> <p>/s/ <b>Kalimah Salahuddin</b> August 15, 2012 Trustee, Jefferson Union High School District</p> <p>/s/ <b>Michael Brownrigg</b> August 12, 2012 Councilman, Burlingame</p> <p>/s/ <b>David Lim</b> August 14, 2012 Deputy Mayor, City of San Mateo</p>	<p>San Mateo County is different. And we believe that we're better because we're different.</p> <p>Unlike in other counties, San Mateo County voters directly elect all five Supervisors, not just one. Measure B takes away your right to do that. Shouldn't there be a better reason than "everyone else is doing it" to take away your ability to hold all five Supervisors accountable?</p> <p>Critics claim that countywide races are too costly; are not competitive; are hard. Where's the evidence? In the last two years we've had three very competitive races with excellent candidates.</p> <p>Supervisors are responsible for a \$1.7 billion budget to support critical services ranging from protecting children and the elderly to ensuring timely responses to 9-1-1 calls.</p> <p>These are services for everyone. With Supervisors elected countywide, no one region of the County gets special treatment because Supervisors must consider the whole County when they make decisions.</p> <p>The ability of voters to elect all five Supervisors has resulted in San Mateo County being one of the best run counties in California. San Mateo County has consistently earned the highest bond ratings among all California counties, saving taxpayer money.</p> <p>There is nothing more democratic than directly electing all five Supervisors. We know. We were elected to the Board of Supervisors in countywide votes.</p> <p>Vote no on Measure B. Don't diminish your power as a San Mateo County voter, resident and taxpayer.</p> <p>San Mateo County may have a tradition of being untraditional. And the record indicates we're better for it.</p> <p>/s/ <b>Anna G. Eshoo</b> August 25, 2012 Member of Congress</p> <p>/s/ <b>Jackie Speier</b> August 27, 2012 Member of Congress</p>

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Argument Against Measure B	Rebuttal to Argument Against Measure B																																																												
<p>San Mateo County’s five Supervisors are elected in a countywide vote to oversee the efficient delivery of public services to all of our County’s 720,000 residents.</p> <p>These services most frequently involve providing access to health care, ensuring public safety, protecting and enhancing the environment and assisting people in cases of emergency. These services benefit and affect the entire County.</p> <p>So that each geographic community is represented, Supervisors must live within a separate district. But they must still consider the entire County’s interest when critical decisions are being made because every voter throughout the County participates in the election of each Supervisor.</p> <p>This system of “at-large” voting has served the County well for decades.</p> <p>Critics want to change the system so that Supervisors are selected solely by voters in geographic districts. We think this is a path that will lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater influence by special interests;</li> <li>Candidates with a sole interest in “bringing home the bacon” for their district; and</li> <li>Political in-fighting that pits areas of the County against each other.</li> </ul> <p>San Mateo County – the third smallest county in California by square miles – is already carved up into 20 separate cities, 24 school districts and dozens of special districts and agencies. Everyone, regardless of where they live, benefits from a Board of Supervisors that looks out for the interests of the entire County.</p> <p>The current “at-large” system increases accountability. Any resident can now pick up the phone or send an e-mail to any one of the five or to all of the Supervisors because each Supervisor represents every resident, not just ones from a certain district.</p> <p>Your influence and ability to have your voice heard will be reduced if we turn to a system where elected representatives are only interested in their district. Vote “No” on Measure “B”</p>	<p>Opponents of district elections assert that such elections will result in parochialism and infighting among county supervisors. But most issues addressed by supervisors do not pit areas of the county against each other. For example, the very issues cited in the opponents’ argument – such as providing access to healthcare and ensuring public safety – are of countywide importance and district elections would rarely lead to differences of opinion among supervisors based solely on where they live.</p> <p>Moreover, in the event of an occasional policy decision in which a supervisorial district might be affected disproportionately, it is absolutely appropriate for a supervisor to advocate vigorously on behalf of district residents. That is the essence of representative democracy.</p> <p>Opponents also claim that district elections will increase the influence of “special interests,” but the opposite is true. District elections offer voters a greater voice in electing their representatives by allowing grassroots candidates the opportunity to compete. Voters are not a “special interest.” They are the only interest that matters.</p> <p>Finally, opponents argue that with countywide elections every voter in the county plays a role in electing every supervisor, thereby increasing accountability. But with so many uncompetitive or simply uncontested supervisorial elections, voters today have few chances to determine who represents them. District elections offer voters a meaningful voice in their county government.</p> <p>It’s long past time for San Mateo County to adopt district elections as have all other counties in California.</p> <p>Empower voters. Vote <b>YES</b> on Measure B.</p> <p>For more information see:  <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/sanmateocountyfairelections/">https://sites.google.com/site/sanmateocountyfairelections/</a></p>																																																												
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