

San Mateo County

Measure C

Shall the San Mateo County Charter be amended to change the elected position of Controller to an appointed position?

Full Text

Shall Section 403 of the County Charter be amended to read as follows:

403. Controller.

The Controller shall be appointed. Notwithstanding Section 416 of this Charter, the first term of office for the Controller appointed pursuant to this Section shall commence January 1, 2013. The Board of Supervisors shall, by ordinance, implement this Section.

SECTION 6. Pursuant to California Elections Code section 9162(a), the Board of Supervisors or a member or members of the Board are authorized to author and submit arguments in regards to the measure listed in section 5 of this ordinance.

SECTION 7. Pursuant to the provisions of Government Code section 25123, this ordinance calling an election shall become effective immediately upon its adoption by this Board of Supervisors.

Impartial Analysis of Measure C

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.

The Controller is the County's chief accounting and auditing officer. The duties of the Controller include: exercising general control over all accounting systems and the financial activities of all County officers and agencies; administration of the countywide property tax apportionment system; establishing a financial reporting system; preparing reports at least monthly on the financial activities of the County and the balance of all funds; and conducting internal audits.

Section 403 of the San Mateo County Charter presently states that the Controller is elected by the voters of the County.

This measure would amend Section 403 of the Charter to provide that the Controller would be appointed starting January 1, 2013, with the Board of Supervisors to implement the amended Charter section by ordinance.

The Board of Supervisors has proposed revisions to the County Ordinance Code, which are effective only upon the voters' approval of the Charter amendment, which would provide that the Controller would thereafter be appointed or removed by the County Manager, subject to confirmation by a 4/5ths vote of the Board of Supervisors. The proposed Ordinance Code changes also provide that persons may not be appointed to more than two consecutive six-year terms in office and would increase the County's minimum qualifications for the office above those set by state law.

Although certain officers are required by the California Constitution and Section 24009 of the Government Code to be elected, the office of County Controller is not one of them, and the voters therefore have the power to make this change.

A "yes" vote on this measure would amend Section 403 of the San Mateo County Charter such that the Controller would be appointed starting January 1, 2013.

A "no" vote on this measure would leave Section 403 of the San Mateo County Charter in its present form, leaving the Controller an elected office.

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 C

In San Mateo County, the Controller is the “chief accounting and auditing officer” – a highly technical position responsible for auditing billions of dollars in public funds, distributing property taxes and preparing detailed financial reports.

This is a job for a highly trained and experienced financial professional.

But in San Mateo County, the office of Controller is an elected position.

We believe the time has come to amend the Charter and to make the Controller an appointed, professional position. We are not alone.

The 2009 -10 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury came to the same conclusion, stating that “the electoral process is not the most practical way to ensure that the best-qualified person” is selected for highly technical financial positions.

The 2010 San Mateo County Charter Review Committee – a group of citizens who studied the structure and function of our County government – also concluded that the Controller position should be appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

These are particularly challenging and confusing economic times. California law already sets minimum qualifications for the Controller position, whether elected or appointed. The Board of Supervisors has adopted an ordinance that will implement additional qualifications, which will become effective if the Charter amendment is approved.

The Controller oversees a staff of accountants, auditors and fiscal personnel. We agree with the Grand Jury’s conclusion that “complicated economic times require expertise that may not be possessed by candidates running for office.” We also agree with the Charter Review Committee that this position should be appointed.

Now more than ever we need an experienced professional overseeing taxpayer funds. Please join us in supporting this measure.

/s/ **Jacqueline Jacobberger** August 16, 2012
President, League of Women Voters of North and Central San Mateo County

/s/ **Lisa Conrad** August 16, 2012
President, League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County

/s/ **Don Horsley** August 17, 2012
Vice President, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

/s/ **Carole Groom** August 16, 2012
Member, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

/s/ **Bob Adler** August 16, 2012
Controller, San Mateo County

No Argument Against Measure C Submitted