

CHANGES TO BALLOT MEASURE PROCESS

The Way It Is Now

Under the City Charter, an ordinance or declaration of policy (measure) may be placed on the ballot in several ways, including:

- By a six-member majority vote of the Board of Supervisors (Board);
- By four or more members of the Board submitting the measure without a vote of the Board;
- By the Mayor submitting the measure without a vote of the Board; or
- By registered voters submitting an initiative petition to the Department of Elections (signature initiative) containing signatures of at least 2% of the registered voters in San Francisco, which currently is approximately 10,600 signatures.

A signature initiative generally appears on the ballot at the next regularly scheduled municipal or statewide election. Signature initiatives that propose an ordinance may call for an earlier election, known as a special election, if the petition contains signatures of voters equal in number to at least 10% of the votes cast for all candidates for Mayor in the last mayoral election. The threshold for a signature initiative to call a special election currently is approximately 39,000 signatures.

Once a signature initiative is submitted to the Department of Elections, it cannot be withdrawn.

The Proposal

The proposal would amend the Charter to eliminate the ability of the Mayor or four or more members of the Board to place a measure on the ballot without a vote of the Board. The Board could still place measures on the ballot by a six-member majority vote.

The proposal would change the way the voters may place a signature initiative on the ballot by increasing the required number of voter signatures to 8% of the registered voters in San Francisco, or approximately 42,500 signatures. The proposed measure would also increase the required number of voter signatures to call a special election on an initiative ordinance to 10% of the registered voters in San Francisco (instead of 10% of votes cast for all candidates for Mayor in the last mayoral election), or approximately 53,100 signatures.

The proposal would allow the proponents of a signature initiative to withdraw the signature initiative from the ballot up to 102 days before the election.