



Legislation Text

File #: 10-1189, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to request City Clerk to implement ballot rotation, consistent with the practice of Los Angeles County and other jurisdictions, to enhance the integrity and fairness of our local elections.

To the extent possible, the election of local representatives should be based on the merit of the candidates, as assessed by the electorate. While this is generally the case in Long Beach, the current practice of allowing a candidate to be listed first on all ballots currently gives some candidates an unfair advantage that should be eliminated to maintain an even playing field. .

Presently, a lottery is held that determines the ballot order of candidates for all ballots in a particular election. For example, in an election between hypothetical candidates Alfonso, Bonnie, and Charles, it may be determined that Charles will be listed first for all ballots.

On average, California City Council and School Board candidates listed first on the ballot are 5.6% more likely to win their election as a result of their ballot position (see attached analysis of the California Elections Data Archive [CEDA] results from 1996 to 2005 as gathered by Meredith and Salant from the Stanford Institute For Economic Policy Research, page 15, as highlighted.) This is significant enough to change the outcome in future elections and make future representatives the result of chance, not merit.

Many jurisdictions have eliminated this problem by introducing ballot rotation, in which candidates rotate their position on the ballot. All counties, including Los Angeles County, require ballot rotation to ensure fair elections. (California Elections Code Sections 13111-13114) We should require the same high standard in our municipal elections.

Using ballot rotation, in our above hypothetical example, Charles would be listed first on . 1/3 of the ballots, Alfonso would be; listed first on 1/3 of the ballots, and Bonnie would be listed first on 1/3 of the ballots,

The City Clerk has communicated that his staff is willing and able to implement ballot rotation, if desired by the City Council. Staff time needed to implement this proposal is estimated at \$2,500 in election years. This cost is a result of staff hours necessary to prepare, verify and format the ballots and the reports that would accompany each rotation. The cost could vary slightly depending on the number of candidates in a given election cycle. The Clerk has indicated he can absorb this cost within his budget.

Approve recommendation.

Councilmember James Johnson
Seventh District

Councilmember Dee Andrews
Sixth District

Councilmember Steve Neal
Ninth District