

April 2, 2019

Members of City Council
City of San Diego
202 C Street, 10th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Pursuant to Measure L, local measures should be placed on November ballots, not before

Dear Members of San Diego City Council:

We, the undersigned voting-rights, civil-rights, social-justice, labor and community organizations, request that you honor the will of the voters and refrain from placing local ballot measures on the March 2020 primary election to decide matters that can and should be decided in the November 2020 general election. This will strengthen our democracy and respect the voters' wishes in overwhelmingly passing Measure L.

In the November 2016 election, two-thirds of the voters (66%) passed Measure L to limit local ballot measures to November general elections when the most people vote. A majority of the voters in every single city council district supported Measure L.

Yes Vote on Measures L as Percentage of Total Vote by Council District

D1 - 65%	D2 - 64%	D3 - 73%
D4 - 69%	D5 - 60%	D6 - 64%
D7 - 64%	D8 - 68%	D9 - 69%

The voters agreed that it was not in the city's best interest to decide on the big issues when the fewest people turn out in primary or special elections; that just gives special interests more influence. According to San Diego's retired city clerk and chief elections officer, Chuck Abdelnour, limiting ballot measures to November general elections is essential in "allowing a larger and more informed public to weigh in on issues important for all of us."

Measure L recognized the need and responsibility of our elected officials to act in times of urgency and included a good governance provision for the City Council to place a measure on an earlier ballot when needed, but the voter intent was to limit this to compelling circumstances. There will come a day when an urgent circumstance arises and the good governance provision will be needed, but that time is not now and the Transient Occupancy Tax / Convention Center Expansion is not the issue.

The proponents of a citizens initiative to increase the TOT to expand the Convention Center seek to have the initiative placed on the March 2020 primary ballot. The voters were clear when they passed Measure L. They want local measures to be voted on during November general elections because that is when the most people vote, that is how state elections are run, and it is how we build an inclusive democracy.

The proponents of the TOT measure had the opportunity to qualify for the November 2018 election, but did not gather enough signatures in time. They have since qualified for the November 2020 ballot, which is when City Council should bring this measure before the voters, not in a lower-turnout primary election eight months earlier. There is no demonstrated urgency and we should not mistake political expediency for urgency.

The TOT measure is an important issue facing the city, but it does not constitute the urgent circumstances that would justify the City Council bypassing the decision of the voters on Measure L. In fact, given that the measure raises significant questions of how public land and public resources should be used, there could be no greater rationale for ensuring the full and maximum participation on these issues by the public in a November election.

We urge you to listen to the voters and respect their decision in Measure L as you have done in the past, such as in June 2017, when you declined to call an early election for a similar measure. The proponents of the TOT measure had the opportunity then to take the steps necessary to qualify for November 2018, but they did not take those steps. Although they have now qualified for November 2020, they again seek to avoid a November election for political gain. Measure L was intended to protect voters from this kind of manipulation.

The argument in favor of Measure L that was published in the San Diego County Voter Registrar's "Voter Information Pamphlet" that all city voters received for the November 2016, stated:

MEASURE L GIVES VOTERS – NOT SPECIAL INTERESTS – POWER TO DECIDE BIG ISSUES

The city's current system gives political parties and special interests – with the power of their money and endorsements – more influence in the [] primary election, and leaves many voters out of the process. Measure L protects taxpayers by ensuring more voters participate in important decisions, and that special interest groups seeking special treatment have less influence.

This is one of the reasons why voters overwhelmingly adopted Measure L. In October 2018, pursuant to Measure L, the City Council directed the City Attorney to prepare to place the TOT measure on the November 2020 ballot. We ask that you proceed with this schedule and not place the measure on an earlier ballot, which would undermine the clear intent of the voters.

We urge you to respect the voters and schedule local ballot measures in the November general election when the most people are engaged on the issues and the most people vote.

Sincerely,

*Affordable Housing Coalition of San Diego County
AFT Guild, Local 1931
Alliance San Diego
Alliance San Diego Mobilization Fund
American Friends Service Committee
California Common Cause
Christ Ministry Center
Council on American Islamic Relations San Diego
CREED-21
Employee Rights Center
Espacio Migrante
Independent Voter Project
Justice Overcoming Boundaries
League of Women Voters, San Diego
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans
Pillars of the Community*

*Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest
Safe Harbors Network
San Diegans for Open Government
San Diego Border Dreamers
San Diego Education Association
SanDiego350
Somali Bantu Association of America
South East Sustainability Coalition
The San Diego LGBT Community Center
Urban League of San Diego County
We The People - San Diego County*