

April 15, 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  
Casa Familiar  
Christ Ministry Center  
Council on American Islamic Relations San Diego  
CREED-21  
Democratic Socialists of America Steering  
Committee - San Diego.  
Earl B. Gilliam Bar Association  
Espacio Migrante  
Independent Voter Project  
Interfaith Justice Coalition*

*Island Grad  
Justice Overcoming Boundaries  
League of Women Voters, San Diego  
MAS PACE  
National Association for the Advancement of  
Colored People (NAACP)  
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans  
Pillars of the Community  
Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest  
RMA Investor Group  
Safe Harbors Network  
San Diegans for Open Government  
San Diego Border Dreamers  
San Diego Education Association  
SanDiego350  
Sierra Club*

*Somali Bantu Association of America*  
*South East Sustainability Coalition*  
*Student African American Brotherhood*  
*The Travelers Club*  
*Think Dignity*  
*Urban League of San Diego County*  
*United Taxi Workers of San Diego*  
*We The People - San Diego County*