



Measure I

City of Santa Rosa

Measure Question

Simple Majority Needed to Pass

Shall the City of Santa Rosa’s measure to amend the Santa Rosa City Charter to affirm the City’s recent transition from the election of Council members by city-wide vote to the election of Council members by district, be adopted?

What Your Vote Means

YES	NO
A “yes” vote would amend the Santa Rosa City Charter to confirm the election of Council members by district.	A “no” vote would not amend the Santa Rosa City Charter to confirm the City’s recent transition to district-based elections.

For and Against Measure I

FOR	AGAINST
Chris Rogers Mayor, City of Santa Rosa	No argument was submitted against Measure I



Local Ballot Measure: I

Arguments and rebuttals are the opinions of the authors. They are printed exactly as submitted, including errors.

City Attorney's Impartial Analysis of Measure I	Argument in Favor of Measure I
<p>Measure I, if approved by the voters, would amend the Santa Rosa City Charter to reflect the City of Santa Rosa's recent transition from the election of Council members by city-wide vote to the election of Council members by district.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Existing Charter Provision</p> <p>City of Santa Rosa is governed by a seven member City Council. Each Council member serves a four-year term. Elections are held every other year. The Council members' terms are staggered, with three Council seats filled in one election and four in the next.</p> <p>Section 4 of the City Charter provides that Council members will be elected "at-large," that is, by city-wide vote. In each election year, a single election is held, all registered voters in the City may vote, and the three or four candidates that receive the highest votes city-wide earn seats on the City Council.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Legal Challenge</p> <p>In 2017, the City received a legal challenge to that at-large voting system. The California Voting Rights Act prohibits use of an at-large voting system if a community experiences racially polarized voting. Racially polarized voting exists when voters in a protected class (defined in the Act as "voters who are members of a race, color, or language minority group") have different electoral preferences than the rest of the electorate. In such situations, the rest of the electorate dilutes the votes of the protected class, impairing the ability of the protected class to elect candidates of its choice or to influence the outcome of the election. The California Voting Rights Act preempts all local laws, including city charters.</p> <p>After review, the City Council found substantial evidence of racially polarized voting within the City, polarization which impaired the ability of the City's Latino voters to elect candidates of their choice and to influence the outcome of elections. The Council therefore initiated transition to district-based elections.</p> <p>On April 17, 2018, Council adopted Ordinance No. 2018-007, which divided the City into seven Council districts and set district boundaries. Each district elects one Council member, who must be a resident and registered voter in the district. Together, the individual Council members from the seven districts constitute the City Council. District elections were held in Districts 2, 4, and 6 in 2018 and Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7 in 2020.</p> <p>City Charter Section 4, however, still provides for at-large Council elections, creating an inconsistency between the Charter and the City's practice. Only the voters of the City can revise the Charter's language.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Measure I</p> <p>If passed, Measure I would revise Section 4 of the Charter to confirm the election of Council members by district, authorize the Council to establish and update the Council districts in accordance with law, and confirm the sequencing of district elections.</p> <p>If Measure I fails, there will remain an inconsistency between the City Charter and the City's current practice of district-based elections. In that event, the Council may consider whether to begin a transition back to at-large elections or to seek judicial guidance in light of the requirements of the California Voting Rights Act.</p> <p>Measure I was recommended by the Charter Review Committee and placed on the ballot by unanimous vote of the Santa Rosa City Council.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">s/ Sue Gallagher City Attorney</p>	<p>In early 2017, Santa Rosa was sued under the California Voting Rights Act. The litigants alleged that the at-large nature of Santa Rosa's elections made it prohibitively difficult for minority candidates to be elected. They were right.</p> <p>While there are a few examples of minority candidates winning seats on the City Council, the overwhelming history of our city shows that neighborhoods with the highest concentration of Latino and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) residents frequently had a preference that was dwarfed by the primarily white areas of the city.</p> <p>No city has ever won a challenge under the California Voting Rights Act. Not one. Not even cities that had a strong record of electing minority candidates. If a city is found to have violated the California Voting Rights Act, they Must switch to district elections.</p> <p>If it was likely that we would lose the lawsuit when we were sued, it became a near-certainty with the annexation of Roseland later that year.</p> <p>A yes vote on Measure I would codify Santa Rosa's move to district elections. A no vote would subject the city to a costly legal fight that we cannot win - and we would end up being forced by the courts to implement district elections anyway.</p> <p>Please vote yes. A no vote needlessly sets the city's money on fire.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">s/ Chris Rogers Mayor, City of Santa Rosa</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No argument was submitted against Measure I</p>



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Full Text of Measure I

EXHIBIT A

CITY OF SANTA ROSA MEASURE NO. 2

CITY OF SANTA ROSA CITY CHARTER AMENDMENT DISTRICT-BASED ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

The People of the City of Santa Rosa hereby amend Section 4 of the Charter of the City of Santa Rosa to read as follows:

[Note: Additions to the text are underlined and deletions are shown in strikethrough.]

Section 1. Section 4 of the Charter of the City of Santa Rosa shall be amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 4. The Council. The legislative body of the City shall consist of seven persons ~~each~~ each elected by separate district, at large to be known collectively as the Council. Boundaries of the seven Council districts shall be established and updated by the Council, by ordinance, in accordance with state and federal law. The members of the Council shall hold office for four years and until their successors are elected and qualified. ~~The terms of the Council member shall alternate so that three members or four members, as the case may be, shall be elected every two years.~~ Council elections for Districts 1, 3, 5 and 7 shall be held every four years beginning with the General Municipal Election in November 2020. Council elections for Districts 2, 4 and 6 shall be held every four years beginning with the General Municipal Election in November 2018. Vacancies that occur in the Council outside of an election cycle shall be filled in accordance with Section 31 Council Vacancies. In case of a tie vote of the electorate, the person elected shall be decided by lot. There shall be no limitation on the number of consecutive terms a Council member or Vice-Mayor may serve. A Council member may not serve consecutive terms as Mayor.

No person shall be eligible to hold office as a member of the Council, unless ~~he or she is~~ they are a resident and registered voter of the Council district for which they seek to hold office ~~City~~ at the time their ~~the person's~~ nomination papers are issued, ~~and is~~ at the time they assume office, and throughout their term, provided, however, that no boundary change made pursuant to this section shall disqualify a member from serving the remainder of their term, an elector of the City.

The Council may act, by ordinance, to provide compensation to each of its members in an amount authorized by State law for the compensation of council members in general law cities of comparable size; provided however, that the Mayor, while holding that office, shall receive compensation in an amount equal to one hundred and fifty percent of the compensation received by another council member.