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San Francisco Elections Commission Redistricting Initiative v2

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Overview

Every ten years the Director of Elections is required by charter to evaluate the federal, state, and local legal compliance of San Francisco's supervisorial boundaries and advise the Board of Supervisors on relevant population changes no later than 60 days after the decennial federal census results have been published. Should the Director of Elections find that the boundaries do not align with population requirements, a nine-person, independent Redistricting Task Force (henceforth RDTF) is formed. Three sets of three task force members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, Elections Commission, and Mayor, respectively.

Presently, each San Francisco district is represented by a single supervisor. The purpose of San Francisco's redistricting process is to ensure fair supervisorial representation for all San Francisco voters. The RDTF must adhere to the United States Constitution, the Federal Voting Rights Act (henceforth VRA), and the San Francisco Charter. The RDTF is required to complete updated and compliant supervisorial districts prior to April 15th on the year in which the first lines will go into effect.

This year's redistricting drew significant public attention across many facets of its operations and decision-making processes. Following the completion of its final map, the RDTF proactively submitted a multi-page final report of their process and recommendations for future commissions' consideration. Some RDTF members also released personal statements regarding their experiences with the process and serving on the task force.

Based on feedback from the public and independent advocacy groups, and in line with its mandate to ensure free, fair, and functional election administration, the San Francisco Elections Commission introduced a Redistricting initiative to offer a public forum for education, dialogue, and soliciting strategic recommendations to strengthen San Francisco's redistricting process.

Objective(s) & Deliverable(s)

This initiative seeks to survey the San Francisco City & County redistricting process and explore potential alternatives to current procedures where appropriate. The Elections Commission will solicit public and subject matter feedback, explore best practices, and synthesize collective input. Based on discovery and insights, the Elections Commission may produce a memorandum that outlines strategic recommendations and/or a proposed Charter amendment for the Board of Supervisors' consideration.

Scope

The Elections Commission's work on redistricting may span at least six months in time though may extend longer as necessary. The initiative will be a joint undertaking by all members of the Elections Commission. Members of the public, advocacy groups, subject matter experts and others are encouraged to participate in the process. Special guests may also be invited by Elections Commissioners to present during relevant Commission meeting agenda items. Special meetings earmarked for redistricting-specific subject matter may be called as needed.

Approach

The Elections Commission will examine the end-to-end San Francisco redistricting process. This may cover broad evaluation of substantive and procedural components from before, during, and after redistricting of single-member supervisorial representation. The work will consider current procedure, explore best practices, and evaluate appropriate alternatives in five interrelated categories, though may expand in scope where relevant and appropriate. The work will be flexible and responsive to public input and external considerations.

1. RDTF Member Composition & Selection
 - a. Type (e.g., independent body of citizens)
 - b. Structure (e.g., size, alternates)
 - c. Candidate recruitment (e.g., timing, channels, candidate pool)
 - d. Diversity, equity, inclusion & representation (e.g., racial, ethnic, and other diversity)
 - e. Selection criteria, vetting, and appointment processes (e.g., political involvement, conflicts of interest, prior participation, appointing authorities)
 - f. Overall timeline (e.g., before or after census data, adjustments for tardiness)
2. Onboarding
 - a. Training & Preparation (e.g., legal, technical, redistricting criteria, best practices)
 - b. Tactical Planning (e.g., deadlines, timeline, action plan with draft map milestones, roles, responsibilities)
 - c. Staffing & Support
 - i. Documentation requirements
 - d. Sunshine Procedure & Training
3. Redistricting requirements & criteria
 - a. Charter requirements (e.g., criteria, considerations, ranking, etc.)
4. Operation
 - a. Public outreach process
 - b. Procedural mapping process (e.g., draft maps, interim deadlines, etc.)
 - c. Voting process (e.g., simple vs super majority change approvals)
5. Accountability & Transparency
 - a. Public input & notice periods
 - b. Decision-making requirements (e.g., written rationale for maps, final reports)
 - c. Intra-commission communications & ex parte communications
 - d. Member replacement / recourse (e.g., misconduct, violation, OR external/personal circumstances)
 - e. Task force recourse (e.g., should a map not get approved)

Plan

The Elections Commission's Redistricting initiative is designed to follow the below outline, though may be adjusted or amended where appropriate and/or necessary.

1. June - Complete
 - a. Forum: Monthly Elections Commission Meeting
 - b. Topic: San Francisco Redistricting Task Force history & high-level overview of alternate redistricting structures.
 - c. Speaker(s)
 - i. Steven Hill, FairVote co-founder and advisor to original Elections Task Force of San Francisco in 1996.
 - ii. Julia Marks, Voting Rights Program Manager and Staff Attorney at Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law caucus.
2. July
 - a. Forum: Monthly Elections Commission Meeting
 - b. Topic: San Francisco supervisorial representation history and insight into independent redistricting archetypes & case studies.
 - c. Invited Speaker(s)
 - i. Gwenn Craig, Former chair of the Elections Task Force and 2000 RDTF Chair.
 - ii. Alesandra Lozano, Voting Rights & Redistricting Program Manager, California Common Cause.
3. September
 - a. Forum: Monthly Elections Commission Meeting (or special meeting if agenda item has potential to exceed one hour)
 - b. Topic: San Francisco's Redistricting in Practice
 - c. Invited Speaker(s)
 - i. Former San Francisco RDTF members and/or staff
 1. 2020
 2. 2010
 3. 2000
 - ii. 2020 Unity Map coalition representative (TBA)
4. October
 - a. Forum: Monthly Elections Commission Meeting
 - b. Topic: Good Government Insight & Best Practices
 - c. Invited Speaker(s): TBA.
5. November
 - a. Forum: Special Meeting(s)
 - b. Topic: Public Input & Feedback
 - c. Invited Speaker(s): TBA.
6. December
 - a. Forum: Monthly Elections Commission Meeting
 - b. Topic: Commissioner Discussion & Potential Action
 - c. Speaker(s): TBA.

