



## Memorandum

**To:** Elections Commission  
**From:** John Arntz, Director  
**Date:** January 10, 2025  
**RE:** Director's Report: January 15, 2025, Elections Commission Meeting

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Following is a brief listing of the work and related information in which the Department of Elections (Department) has been engaged since the previous report issued in relation to the Elections Commission meeting on December 18, 2024.

**I. The Department has been preparing its budget proposals for the FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27 cycles.**

- A. In developing its budget proposals for FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27, the Department has sought to balance its commitment to equitable voting access and free, fair, and functional elections with the City's need to address a significant projected budget shortfall.
- B. San Francisco's Five-Year Financial Plan projects a two-year General Fund deficit exceeding \$870 million, which is expected to grow to more than \$1.5 billion by FY 2029-30. To address these fiscal challenges, the Mayor has directed all departments to implement ongoing, permanent spending reductions beginning in FY 2025-26. For the Department, this equates to approximately \$1.1 million in reductions starting in FY 2025-26.
- C. To mitigate programmatic, operational, or staffing impacts, the Department has prioritized solutions that generate ongoing General Fund spending reductions while maintaining the high level of accessible, multilingual voter services that San Francisco voters expect and are entitled to by law.
- D. To meet spending reduction targets, the Department's budget proposals include amendments to the San Francisco Municipal Elections Code (SFMEC) aimed at reducing the costs of preparing and distributing the Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP). These changes are projected to save between \$500,000 and \$950,000 per election while ensuring election information remains accessible to voters.

i. Printing of Legal Text in the VIP

Current Requirement: Full legal text of ballot measures must be included unless it exceeds 100 pages.

Proposed Change: Limit printed legal text to the first 20 pages for all ballot measures, with full text available online, at libraries, or by mail upon request.

Savings: \$57,000 to \$200,000 per election.

ii. Distribution of the VIP

Current Requirement: Individual VIP is mailed to each registered voter.

Proposed Change: Mail one VIP per household, unless individual voters request their own copy. Households with voters with different language preferences or party preferences will still receive multiple VIPs.

Savings: \$450,000 to \$750,000 per election.

Alignment with State Mailing Practices: This amendment aligns VIP mailing practices with California Elections Code (CAEC) Section 9094, which governs the distribution of the state Voter Information Guide (VIG). Under CAEC Section 9094(a), the VIG is mailed to each household, even if multiple voters reside there, unless an individual specifically requests their own copy.

- E. While proposing these amendments, the Department's budget proposals are fully committed to its core responsibilities: delivering accessible, multilingual election services mandated by law, conducting robust voter outreach and education initiatives, and ensuring elections are free, fair, and functional.
- F. The Department will submit its budget proposals to the Elections Commission by January 31, 2025. These proposals must undergo public review during at least two public meetings, with the first meeting occurring no less than 15 days before the meeting at which the Elections Commission approves the budget.
- G. Should the Elections Commission choose to propose changes to its budget contained within the Department's overall budget, it must provide justification for each change to the Director by Wednesday, February 19, 2025. This timeline ensures that the Department has two days to incorporate the changes into the budget system and finalize required forms by the Charter-mandated submission deadline of February 21, 2025.

## II. The Department continues to carry out its operations and general administrative functions.

- A. The Department continues its voter roll maintenance efforts, ensuring accurate and up-to-date voter records. This work includes processing registration updates and cancellations, issuing voter notices and address confirmation postcards, and integrating data from state and local agencies, such as updates from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), the National Change of Address (NCOA) system, reports on deceased individuals from the Department of Public Health, and weekly updates from the Secretary of State regarding prison commitments and conservatorships.
- B. Last month, the Department mailed multilingual voter registration pre-cancellation notices to approximately 52,000 voters who met the criteria for cancellation under state election law and the National Voter Registration Act. These criteria included failure to vote since the November 8, 2022 election, failure to respond to an address confirmation postcard, and failure to confirm continued residency in California. The forwardable postcard outlined the reasons for cancellation and provided options to prevent it, such as returning the postage-paid postcard or contacting the Department within 15 days.
  - i. To date, the Department has received approximately 90 responses from voters affirming their California address information and requesting to remain registered to vote in San Francisco County. This month, the Department will cancel the registrations of voters who were mailed the notice and did not respond to affirm their information.
- C. The Department has begun updating the content of its website's informational pages and tools to ensure the information remains current and accurate. This effort includes archiving or removing content specific to the

November 2024 election, updating details to reflect newly elected officials and upcoming election dates, revising the Voter Portal to include information relevant to voters during the off-election cycle, and refreshing the homepage to provide timely and relevant information for website visitors.

- i. The homepage of sfelections.org now features a banner highlighting voter registration, which serves as a direct link to the online voter registration application. Additionally, the homepage sections have been updated to include links to frequently sought topics during non-election periods, ensuring users can easily access key resources.
  - ii. The Department has finalized the translation of all updated content into Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino and implemented these translations across the website's multilingual versions.
  - iii. Due to the City's Digital Services freezing access to departmental websites from January 6–21, the Department has temporarily paused all website updates. During this period, editors are unable to make changes to existing content or post new material.
  - iv. Starting January 21, the new content management system (CMS) and updated site design will be fully live and ready for use, allowing the Department to resume updating its website.
- D. The Department continues to engage with communities across San Francisco through its outreach efforts. The outreach team has been participating in neighborhood events, hosting resource tables, and distributing materials to share information about voter registration options. During the off-season election cycle, the Department collaborates with organizations such as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Latino Task Force (LTF), GLIDE and Project Homeless to support new citizens, immigrant communities, and vulnerable and hard to reach residents.
- E. The Department has been planning the first phase of its 2025 Voter Outreach and Education program, scheduled to run through June 2025. This initiative will focus on promoting voter registration, assisting residents in updating their voter information, and raising awareness about the availability of translated election materials and accessible voting options. The program will aim at fostering civic engagement through partnerships with community organizations, schools, and local agencies to reach vulnerable and hard to reach populations, including newly naturalized citizens, voters with disabilities, and residents experiencing homelessness or without a fixed address. Youth engagement will also be a major focus of this program, with targeted efforts to pre-register eligible young voters, promote high school poll worker service, and encourage their involvement in elections.
- F. The Department has been conducting a review of its operational procedures, voter-facing materials, and supporting applications to identify areas for improvement and enhance efficiency in future election cycles. This review focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of current workflows, the clarity and accuracy of procedural documentation, the user-friendliness and impact of voter-facing materials, and the functionality of tools and applications utilized during the 2024 elections.
- G. The Department has been holding debrief meetings with vendors and service providers to evaluate service delivery, identify cost-saving opportunities, and plan for future needs, including the integration of Vietnamese language services. Effective January 1, 2026, San Francisco's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) threshold under the Language Access Ordinance will decrease from 10,000 to 6,000 individuals, making Vietnamese a required

language for certification. As a result, the Department will be required to provide election services (e.g., outreach) and materials (e.g., ballots) in Vietnamese starting with the June 2026 Election.

- H. On December 3, the Department received a Notice of Intention to circulate a recall petition regarding the District 4 Board of Supervisors Member. The Department has completed two reviews of the draft petition template for compliance with legal requirements submitted by the proponents. The proponents must still implement edits to the petition and provide them to the Department's for review and approval prior to circulating the petition.

**III. Responses to the Commission's request for information to be included in the Director's monthly report.**

*Data on registration rates and outreach events: 1) Total new registrations, 2) New registrations by supervisory districts, 3) Tactics employed (outreach, community engagement, grant funding, etc.) and in which districts, 4) Tactics employed by districts.*

- A. Between December 1 – December 31, the Department processed 1,332 affidavits of registrants, residing in the following Supervisorial Districts (SD): SD 1 – 92, SD 2 – 182, SD 3 – 146, SD 4 – 98, SD 5 – 147, SD 6 – 140, SD 7 – 106, SD 8 – 105, SD 9 – 113, SD 10 – 107, SD 11 – 96.
- B. Between December 1 – December 31, the Department conducted 14 outreach events; which had approximately 1395 people in attendance collectively. The number of such events by Supervisorial District was: SD 2 – 1, SD 3 – 6, SD 6 – 1, SD 9 – 5, SD 11 – 1.