

Office of Victim and Witness Rights; Legal Services for Domestic Violence Victims*

Digest by the Ballot Simplification Committee

Status: Draft for Consideration
On: Tuesday, March 1, 2022
Members: Packard, Anderson, Merrill, Patterson

Deadline to Request Reconsideration: TBD

The Way It Is Now: The San Francisco District Attorney's Office has a Division of Victim Services that provides support to victims of violent crimes. Among other duties, this division provides crisis support to victims, makes referrals to applicable services, and supports victims in criminal investigatory interviews, hearings, and trials.

The City's Office of Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention works with survivors of sexual violence to address the City's responses to their complaints, engages with government agencies to improve responses to allegations, and collaborates with community stakeholders on preventing sexual violence.

The City's Department on the Status of Women manages the Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Intervention Grants Program to support community-based programs. That department along with the Department of Human Resources also manages the Domestic Violence Liaison Program to provide City employees with domestic violence prevention and intervention resources.

The Proposal: Proposition ___ would create an Office of Victim and Witness Rights (Office) as a new City department. The Office would:

- provide services to witnesses and victims of all types of crimes, or coordinate delivering those services;
- annually survey witnesses and victims about the services that they receive through the Office;
- make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (Board) regarding any unmet needs for witnesses and victims; and
- after appointing the department head of the Office, introduce an ordinance that would consolidate all City services for witnesses and victims under the Office.

Under Proposition ___, the Office would introduce an ordinance establishing a one-year pilot program to provide free legal services for domestic violence victims, starting by July 1, 2023.

Proposition ___ would also seek to establish a permanent program to provide free legal services for domestic violence victims, under the Office's direction, subject to further Board legislation. As proposed by this measure, to qualify for these free legal services, the domestic violence victim must either reside in the City or be the victim of a domestic violence incident that occurred in the City.

A "YES" Vote Means: If you vote "yes," you want to establish a new Office of Victim and Witness Rights to provide or coordinate City services to witnesses and victims of crimes and to support the creation of programs that would provide free legal services to domestic violence victims.

A "NO" Vote Means: If you vote "no," you do not want to make these changes.

**Working title, for identification only. The Director of Elections determines the title of each local ballot measure; measure titles are not considered during Ballot Simplification Committee meetings.*