

Students for Choice
Save the JROTC in San Francisco Committee
P. O. Box 16265
San Francisco, CA 94116
Quincy Yu and Michael Bernick, Co-Chairs

August 3, 2008

SUBJECT: Response to the Request for Reconsideration of the Approved Second Draft Digest on the “San Francisco Public High School Students Participation in the JROTC” Initiative

Betty Packard, Chair, and Members
Ballot Simplification Committee
City and County of San Francisco
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Rm. 48
San Francisco, CA 94102

ATTN: Barbara Carr

Dear Chairwoman Packard and Committee members:

On behalf of Quincy Yu and Michael Bernick, the Co-Chairs of Students for Choice which is the broad-based community coalition which gathered 13,500 signatures and qualified the “San Francisco Public High School Students Participation in the JROTC” Initiative for the November 4, 2008 ballot, we want to thank you for doing your homework in studying all the materials provided to you by the proponents and opponents of this measure, asking probing questions of witnesses and the Deputy City Attorney, and using common sense judgment as to what appropriately belongs in a digest and what should be included in arguments submitted by either side.

After a 135 minute hearing, the Ballot Simplification Committee unanimously adopted the second draft digest on the JROTC initiative.

The digest was a compromise. It did not include key concerns that we had about whether the program was going to be phased out or terminated, and whether the School Board was calling for an alternative or a replacement program, but it did describe objectively what the program is, what actions the School Board took to eliminate the program, and what our proposal would do.

The approved digest, to our way of thinking, did not include opinions, assumptions, or speculation on the part of the Committee or the Deputy City Attorney, and that is as it should be. Digests should be kept short and simple, understandable to voters with an 8th grade education as required by law, and not include extraneous issues not included in the proposal. This is particularly important this campaign season given that the voters will have to wade through two dozen measures in the San Francisco Voter Information Pamphlet the size of a small telephone

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book. The longer and more complex the digests are, the less likely they will be read, to the detriment of our electoral system and good government.

Within 24 hours, three officeholders and a former officeholder (Supervisors Ammiano and Dufty, School Board President Sanchez, and former School Board member Kelly) – none of whom attended the hearing on Thursday – issued virtually identical requests for reconsideration, and because their action items are the same, I will address their requests as one request.

We would ask that the request(s) be denied on the bases that 1) the proposed language and documentation are the same as were presented to the Committee on Thursday, 2) the language and documentation are not enhanced by the fact that three current and one former public officials have submitted it, and 3) the Committee in its considered judgment rejected the language and reasoning on these three recommendations introduced at the hearing last Thursday.

The Committee reasoned correctly that there was no basis in fact to delete the first two sentences from THE WAY IT IS NOW: based on documentation provided the Committee by the proponents and the members’ own knowledge of how the School District operates, and that the additional language based on the “findings” of the School Board’s resolution “phasing out the JROTC program” didn’t belong in the digest because the “facts” surrounding the issue of “discrimination” were disputed, but would appropriately be included in the Opponents’ argument, rebuttal to the Proponents’ argument, and in paid arguments.

Should the Committee go forward to consider the reconsideration, Gerry Paratore, the JROTC instructor from Balboa who spoke before you on Thursday, at that point will provide Barbara Carr, your Committee, the Deputy City Attorney, and the public detailed written rebuttals and documentation on the three points of contention, and we would hope that you would take a few minutes to review our rebuttal before beginning your deliberations.

We understand that the request for reconsideration is the third item on Monday’s agenda and that the first two items may take up 3 to 4 hours before the third item is considered. We will be present throughout the morning and early afternoon so when the item comes up, we can serve as a resource to answer any questions you have and to provide counter arguments to anything that the appellants espouse which we believe are non-factual or not germane for a digest.

We look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Bowman
Member, Steering Committee
Students for Choice