

# Words You Need to Know

By the Ballot Simplification Committee

**10-year Capital Plan** (Proposition B): The San Francisco Administrative Code requires the City to prepare and adopt a 10-year plan describing a strategy to meet the City's capital infrastructure needs. The plan includes a timeline for issuing new bonds.

**Affordable housing** (Proposition C): Residential units that persons or households within a certain range of incomes would be able to afford. See "low income" and "moderate income."

**Amend** (Propositions C and D): To change a law.

**Area Median Income:** A level of income based on all incomes earned within Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties. Half of all households in this area have incomes above this level and half have incomes below this level.

**Audit** (Proposition B): A formal examination of financial or management accounts and information.

**Bond** (Proposition B): A bond is a promise by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a specific date. If the City needs to raise a large amount of money to pay for a library, sewer line, school, hospital or other project or program, it may borrow the money by selling bonds. (See also "General Obligation Bond.")

**Charter amendment** (Propositions C, D and F): A change to the City's Charter. The Charter is the City's Constitution. The Charter can only be changed by a majority of the votes cast.

**Community college** (Proposition A): A public institution of higher education that provides general education and workforce training. San Francisco's community college is called City College of San Francisco.

**Community College Board** (Proposition A): A seven-member body, elected by San Francisco voters, that oversees City College of San Francisco (also known as the Board of Trustees or Governing Board).

**Constitutional amendment** (Proposition G): An amendment to the U.S. Constitution may be proposed by a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress or by a constitutional convention called by at least two-thirds of the States. To become effective, a proposed amendment must be approved by three-fourths of the States.

**Declaration of policy** (Proposition G): A statement or expression of the will of the voters.

**Early voting** (Frequently Asked Questions): Voting in person at City Hall before Election Day or mailing a vote-by-mail ballot before Election Day. See page 7 for more information.

**Exempt** (Proposition E): Free from an obligation or requirement that others must follow.

**Facilities** (Propositions B, C and F): Buildings or structures used for particular purposes.

**First Amendment** (Proposition G): This provision of the US Constitution states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

**General Fund** (Proposition C): That part of the City's annual budget that can be used for any City purpose. Each year, the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors decide how the General Fund will be used. Money for the General Fund comes from property, business, sales, and other taxes and fees. Currently, the General Fund is 47% of the City's budget.

**General obligation bond** (Proposition B): A promise issued by a government body to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a certain date. The government body repays the money, plus interest, over a period of years with property taxes. General obligation bond measures must be approved by the voters.

**Gross receipts** (Proposition E): The total amount a business receives, in whatever form, for its products and services.

**Groundwater** (Proposition F): Water beneath the earth's surface that supplies wells and springs.

**Hetch Hetchy Regional Water System** (Proposition F): Facilities owned and operated by San Francisco for the storage, treatment, and distribution of water located in the Counties of Tuolumne, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco. The Hetch Hetchy Regional Water System provides water to 2.5 million Bay Area users and generates 100% greenhouse gas-free energy that meets all of San Francisco's municipal power requirements.



**Hydroelectric power** (Proposition F): A term referring to electricity produced through the use of the force of falling or flowing water.

**Initiative** (Proposition F): A proposition placed on the ballot by voters. Any voter may place an initiative on the ballot by gathering the required number of valid signatures on a petition.

**Low income household** (Proposition C): A household whose combined annual gross income for all members does not exceed 60 percent of Area Median Income (currently \$61,800 for a four-person household).

**Moderate income household** (Proposition C): A household whose combined annual gross income for all members does not exceed 120 percent of Area Median Income (currently \$123,600 for a four-person household).

**Off-site units** (Proposition C): Housing units provided somewhere other than the primary development project.

**On-site units** (Proposition C): Housing units included as part of the primary development project.

**Ordinance** (Propositions E and F): A local law passed by the Board of Supervisors or by the voters.

**Oversight** (Propositions A and B): Monitoring activities to ensure that the purposes of a program are followed.

**Parcel tax** (Proposition A): A tax that is based on a flat fee for each unit of real property that receives a separate tax bill.

**Park forestry programs** (Proposition B): A program that performs park reforestation work, such as hazardous tree removal, pruning and tree planting under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Parks Commission.

**Pass through** (Proposition A): To recover an increase in property taxes by passing on a portion of the cost to tenants.

**Payroll costs** (Proposition E): The amount a business spends as compensation for services, including payments in the form of salaries, wages, bonuses, commissions, and property. Also known as payroll expense.

**Proposition** (Propositions A–G): Any measure that is submitted to the voters for approval or disapproval.

**Provisional ballot**: A ballot cast at a polling place that will not be counted until the Department of Elections verifies the voter's eligibility to cast that ballot.

**Public Utilities Commission (PUC)** (Proposition F): See "San Francisco Public Utilities Commission."

**Qualified write-in candidate** (Frequently Asked Questions): A person who has completed the required paperwork and signatures for inclusion as a write-in candidate. Although the name of this person will not appear on the ballot, voters can vote for this person by writing the name of the person in the space on the ballot provided for write-in votes and following specific ballot instructions. The Department of Elections counts write-in votes only for qualified write-in candidates.

**Recycled water** (Proposition F): Former wastewater or sewage that is treated to remove impurities for the purpose of reuse.

**Renewable energy sources** (Proposition F): Energy that comes from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, water flow, tides, and geothermal heat.

**Reservoir** (Proposition F): A natural or artificial place where water is collected and stored for use, especially to supply drinking water to a community, irrigate land, and generate power.

**Retirement of bond debt** (Proposition B): Paying off bond debt.

**Revenue bond** (An Overview of San Francisco's Debt): If the City needs money to pay for something, such as the construction or repair of a facility, the City may borrow the money by selling bonds. The City pays back the money with interest. Revenue bonds are bonds that are paid back using money such as fees collected by the department that issued the bonds. These bonds are not repaid with property tax money. (See also "General Obligation Bond.")

**San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC)** (Proposition F): The City agency that provides water, wastewater, and municipal power services to San Francisco.

**Seismic** (Proposition B): Relating to earthquakes.

**Storm water discharge** (Proposition F): Storm water is water from rain, snow or hail. In San Francisco, storm water that does not go into the ground is collected, treated and discharged into the bay or ocean.

**Streetscape** (Proposition C): Features that collectively make up the visual appearance of the street, alley, or pedestrian way, including trees, landscaping, lighting, street furniture, paving materials, curb alignments, utilities, and other miscellaneous elements.

**Tax rate** (Proposition E): The percentage of gross receipts or payroll costs that is paid as a tax.

**Tax revenue** (Proposition E): The amount of money the City receives from a particular tax.

**Term** (Proposition D): The period of time for which a public official may hold his or her office.

**Vote-by-mail ballots** (Frequently Asked Questions): Ballots mailed to voters or given to voters in person at the Department of Elections. Vote-by-mail ballots can be mailed to the Department of Elections, turned in at the Department of Elections office in City Hall, or turned in at any San Francisco polling place on Election Day. Also known as absentee ballots. See page 7 for more information.

**Water filtration** (Proposition F): A method of purifying water for drinking purposes.



## Important Notice

### Residential Confirmation Postcard

#### Will you vote in the upcoming election?

When people don't vote, we begin to think they may no longer live in San Francisco.

When our records include people who no longer live in San Francisco, tax money is needlessly spent maintaining their records, mailing election materials to them, and preparing to count votes that will never be cast.

In January 2013, we will update our voter records, but we do not want to lose track of anybody still living in San Francisco just because they haven't voted in recent elections.

As part of this update, we will mail several thousand residential confirmation postcards to people who, in the past four years:

- have not voted in any election, or
- have not updated their name, address or party affiliation.

If you receive one of these postcards, please take the time to mail it back to us **within 15 days of receipt** to confirm your residential and mailing addresses. ***If we don't hear from you, we will inactivate your voter registration.*** Voters whose files are inactivated will not receive a Voter Information Pamphlet for future elections.

So, let us know if you still live in San Francisco and want to remain on the active voter roll. PLEASE take the time to vote, respond to our mailing, or write to let us know that you want to stay on the active voter roll. If you write to us, please sign the letter and include the date, your current San Francisco residential address, your mailing address if different from your San Francisco residential address, your birthplace, and your date of birth.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Voter Services Division,  
Department of Elections



# Words You Need to Know

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**Amend** (Propositions C, D, E, F and G): To change a law.

**Applicable codes** (Proposition A): Laws and regulations, such as the Education Code or the Building Code, that apply to certain structures and activities.

**Areas with lowest average test scores** (Proposition H): Specific areas in the City where the average test score is in the lowest 20% of standardized test scores, when compared with other areas in the City.

**Attendance area** (Proposition H): Geographic boundaries drawn around elementary schools for the purposes of student assignment. Middle and high schools do not have attendance areas.

**Bond** (Propositions A and B): A bond is a promise by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a specific date. If the City needs to raise a large amount of money to pay for a library, sewer line, school, hospital or other project or program, it may borrow the money by selling bonds. (See also "General Obligation Bond".)

**Calendar year** (Proposition F): A 12-month period, beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31 of each year.

**California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS)** (Propositions C and D): CalPERS is a State-run system that provides pension benefits for California public employees. Some City employees receive pension benefits through CalPERS rather than the San Francisco Employee Retirement System. These employees include sheriff's deputies, probation officers, district attorney and public defender investigators, juvenile court counselors, and institutional police officers.

**Campaign consultant** (Proposition F): A person who provides campaign services, such as hiring campaign staff, supervising the use of campaign funds, directing the solicitation of campaign contributions, selecting vendors, producing campaign

literature and advertising, seeking endorsements, or advising on public policy positions.

**Charter amendment** (Propositions C, D and E): A change to the City's Charter. The Charter is the City's Constitution. The Charter can only be changed by a majority of the votes cast.

**Compensation** (Propositions C, D and F): Payments, fees, or anything else of value provided in exchange for services.

**Cost-of-living adjustment** (Propositions C and D): An annual increase in pension benefits. San Francisco Employee Retirement System pays a basic cost-of-living increase of up to 2% based on inflation. It may also pay a supplemental cost-of-living increase up to a combined total of 3.5% annually.

**Covered compensation** (Propositions C and D): Employee compensation that is considered when calculating pension contributions and benefits.

**Defined benefits** (Propositions C and D): A set monthly amount qualified employees are entitled to receive after they retire from public service.

**Designated feeder school** (Proposition H): Elementary school from which students normally are assigned to a specific middle school.

**Electronic filing** (Proposition F): Providing or submitting information through the electronic transmission of data (e.g., e-mail).

**Environmentally sustainable** (Proposition A): Furthers the long-term well-being of the environment.

**Ethics Commission** (Proposition F): The City's Ethics Commission is responsible for administering, interpreting and enforcing City ethics laws, including laws regulating campaign contributions, conflicts of interest, lobbyists, campaign consultants, whistle-blowing, public records, and public meetings. The Ethics Commission also provides educational materials and advice on ethics

questions. The Ethics Commission consists of five members, appointed by the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, City Attorney, District Attorney, and Assessor-Recorder, respectively.

**Feeder school** (Proposition H): see “designated feeder school.”

**Final compensation** (Propositions C and D): The average of an employee’s highest annual compensation over the relevant period.

**General obligation bond** (Propositions A and B): A promise issued by a government body to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a certain date. The government body repays the money, plus interest, over a period of years with property taxes. General obligation bond measures must be approved by the voters.

**Health Service Board** (Proposition C): A seven-member City board that oversees the Health Service System.

**Health Service System** (Proposition C): A City-run system that provides health benefits to eligible employees, retirees and dependents of the City, Unified School District, Community College District, and Superior Court.

**Initiative** (Propositions D and H): A proposition placed on the ballot by voters. Any voter may place an initiative on the ballot by gathering the required number of valid signatures on a petition.

**Local campaign** (Proposition F): A campaign for or against local ballot measures or candidates for local offices, including Mayor, Board of Supervisors, City Attorney, District Attorney, Treasurer, Sheriff, Assessor-Recorder, Public Defender, Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District, and Governing Board of the San Francisco Community College District.

**Ordinance** (Propositions E, F and G): A local law passed by the Board of Supervisors or by the voters.

**Oversight** (Propositions A and B): Monitoring activities to ensure that they follow the purposes of a program.

**Programs for children and seniors** (Proposition G): Programs designed to benefit children and seniors, such as delivering meals to seniors, providing in-home assistance to seniors, establishing adult day care, supporting child care, and paying for health care for children and families.

**Proposition** (Propositions A–H): Any measure that is submitted to the voters for approval or disapproval.

**Provisional Ballot**: A ballot cast at a polling place that will not be counted until the Department of Elections verifies the voter’s eligibility to cast that ballot.

**Public safety programs** (Proposition G): Programs designed to safeguard the public, such as community policing, police officer and firefighter salaries, police academy classes, and replacement of police vehicles and firefighting equipment.

**Qualified Write-In Candidate** (Frequently Asked Questions): A person who has completed the required paperwork and signatures for inclusion as a write-in candidate. Although the name of this person will not appear on the ballot, voters can vote for this person by writing the name of the person in the space on the ballot provided for write-in votes and following the specific ballot instructions. The Department of Elections counts write-in votes only for qualified write-in candidates.

**Repeal** (Proposition E): To remove a law, so that it no longer has any effect.

**Required valid signatures** (Proposition E): The number of signatures of voters registered in San Francisco required on a petition to qualify a measure for the ballot, according to state and local law.

**Sales tax** (Proposition G): A tax added to the sale of certain retail goods.

**San Francisco County Transportation Authority** (Proposition G): The Transportation Authority is a public agency that is separate from the City, although the 11 members of the Board of Supervisors serve as members of the Authority’s



governing board. The Transportation Authority uses a portion of sales tax money to pay for transportation projects approved by the voters.

**San Francisco Employees' Retirement System**

**(SFERS)** (Propositions C and D): A City-run system that provides pension benefits to most City employees. SFERS also provides pension benefits to some employees of the Unified School District, Community College District, and Superior Court.

**School facilities** (Proposition A): Buildings and structures that house schools or activities that support schools.

**Seismic upgrade** (Propositions A and B): Improving or renovating a structure to protect it from potential earthquake damage.

**Service retirement** (Propositions C and D): A pension benefit available to employees who meet age and years of service requirements. Employees who qualify for service retirement receive defined benefits determined by final compensation, retirement age, and length of service.

**Special district** (Proposition G): A government body with limited powers formed to provide a specific service. (This is not related to Supervisorial districts.)

**Street corridor** (Proposition B): A number of consecutive blocks of a street, including the sidewalks and medians.

**Vesting allowance** (Propositions C and D): A retirement benefit available to certain employees who have worked for the City for at least five years. Employees who qualify for a vesting

allowance receive payments based on the employee's contributions to SFERS, a matching employer contribution, and interest.

**Vesting retirement** (Proposition D): A retirement benefit available to some safety employees who leave City employment before becoming eligible for a service retirement. Those employees who work for the City for at least five years may receive benefits that are calculated according to the same formula used for "service retirement" (defined above).

**Vote-by-Mail Ballots** (Frequently Asked Questions): Ballots mailed to voters or given to voters in person at the Department of Elections. Vote-by-mail ballots can be mailed to the Department of Elections, turned in at the Department of Elections office in City Hall, or turned in at any San Francisco polling place on Election Day. Also known as absentee ballots. See page 5 for more information.



**For more information and an interactive demonstration on ranked-choice voting, visit**  
*[www.sfelections.org/demo](http://www.sfelections.org/demo)*

## Words You Need to Know

by the Ballot Simplification Committee

**Affordable Housing** (Proposition A): Residential units that persons or households within a certain range of incomes would be able to afford.

**Amend** (Propositions AA, B, C, D, E, F, G and L): To change.

**Bond** (Proposition A): A bond is a promise by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a specific date. If the City needs to raise a large amount of money to pay for a library, sewer line, school, hospital or other project or program, it may borrow the money by selling bonds. (See also "General Obligation Bond".)

**California Public Employees Retirement System** (CalPERS) (Proposition B): manages retirement benefits for California public employees. Some San Francisco City employees participate in CalPERS retirement plans.

**Charter Amendment** (Propositions B, C, D, E, F and G): A change to the City's Charter. The Charter is the City's Constitution. The Charter can only be changed by a majority of the votes cast.

**Combined Election** (Proposition E): An election that includes a combination of municipal, district, state or federal candidates or measures.

**Compensation** (Proposition B): Salary and certain other payments to an employee. For the purpose of calculating retirement benefits for City employees, compensation generally excludes overtime pay. For some San Francisco employees hired before November 1976, compensation includes overtime.

**Deferred Loans** (Proposition A): Loans that postpone principal and/or interest payments for a period of time.

**District Election** (Proposition E): An election for officers or measures of a district, such as the Community College District, San Francisco Unified School District or BART. Does not refer to Supervisorial district elections.

**Exemption** (Propositions J and K): Freedom from an obligation or requirement that others must follow.

**Expenditure Plan** (Proposition AA): A written report describing how funds will be used. The Expenditure Plan for the Vehicle Registration Fee is included with the legal text for the measure.

**Federal Election** (Proposition E): An election for candidates to federal office, such as President of the United States or members of Congress.

**Felony** (Proposition D): A major crime or offense that is punishable by a fine and/or a jail sentence of more than a year.

**General Fund** (Propositions J, K and N): That part of the City's annual budget that can be used for any City purpose. Each year, the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors decide how the General Fund will be used. Money for the General Fund comes from property, business, sales, and other taxes and fees. Currently, the General Fund is 46% of the City's budget.

**General Obligation Bond** (Proposition A): A promise issued by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a certain date. When the City wants to raise money to pay for a large public project, it can borrow money by issuing General Obligation Bonds. The City then repays the money plus interest over a period of years with property taxes. General obligation bonds must be approved by the voters.

**Initiative** (Propositions B, G, I and J): A proposition placed on the ballot by voters. Any voter may place an initiative on the ballot by gathering the required number of signatures on a petition.

**Legally Recognized Caregiver** (Proposition D): A person who is at least 18 years old, lives with a minor child, and completes a form to enroll the minor in school and consent to school-related medical care on behalf of the minor.

**Local Election** (Proposition E): See "municipal election."

**Municipal Election** (Proposition E, I): An election that involves only San Francisco offices and ballot measures. Generally, municipal elections are held in San Francisco on the first Tuesday immediately following the first Monday in November in odd-numbered years.

**Operator** (Proposition G): A person who drives a MUNI vehicle or performs related functions.

**Ordinance** (Propositions AA, C, D, H, I, J, K, L, M and N): A local law passed by the Board of Supervisors or by the voters.

**Oversight** (Proposition A): Watchful care or management; supervision.

**Parole** (Proposition D): Period of supervised release after a prison term.

**Pass Through** (Proposition A): To recover an increase in property taxes by passing on a portion of the cost to tenants.

**Pavement to Parks Program** (Proposition L): A City program that installs temporary parks and plazas on portions of City streets.

**Payment for a Room and Related Charges** (Propositions J and K): Payments subject to the hotel tax, including charges for a guest room, for additional guests, including pets, to occupy the room, or for use of a safe. Related charges include no-show charges; cancellation charges; charges for early or late arrival or departure; hospitality suites; and charges for parking for hotel guests.

**Proposition** (Propositions AA–N): Any measure that is submitted to the voters for approval or disapproval.

**Proposition H** (Proposition B): A Charter amendment passed by the voters in November 2002 that increased retirement benefits for City police and firefighters.

**Provisional Ballot**: A ballot cast at a polling place that will not be counted until the Department of Elections verifies the voter's eligibility to cast that ballot.

**Qualified Write-In Candidate** (Frequently Asked Questions): A person who has completed the required paperwork and signatures for inclusion as a write-in candidate. Although the name of this person will not appear on the ballot, voters can vote for this person by writing the name of the person in the space on the ballot provided for write-in votes and following the specific ballot instructions. The Department of Elections counts write-in votes only for certified write-in candidates.

**Retirement Benefits** (Proposition B): Primarily pensions paid in retirement based on employees' age, years of service and final compensation. Benefits, which are administered through the Retirement System, also include disability and survivor benefits. Retirees may also receive health benefits through the Health Service System.

**Seismic** (Proposition A): Relating to earthquakes.

**Single-Room Occupancy** (Proposition A): A type of housing with only one room per unit. Also known as SRO.

**State Election** (Proposition E): An election for California offices or ballot measures, such as the Governor, members of the State Senate or Assembly, or an amendment to the State Constitution.

**Term** (Proposition F): The period of time for which a public official may hold his or her office.

**Transit Employees** (Proposition G): Persons who work for the City's Municipal Railway transit system (MUNI). This includes MUNI operators and mechanics.

**Vote-by-Mail Ballots** (Frequently Asked Questions): Ballots mailed to voters or given to voters in person at the Department of Elections. Vote-by-mail ballots can be mailed to the Department of Elections, turned in at the Department of Elections office in City Hall, or turned in at any San Francisco polling place on Election Day. Also known as absentee ballots. See page 5 for more information.

## Read the Fine Print— in Large Print

The Department of Elections offers the Voter Information Pamphlet in large print. Sign up to receive one by calling 415-554-4375.

The large-print Voter Information Pamphlet is also available in Chinese and Spanish.

**vote!**

## Words You Need to Know

by the Ballot Simplification Committee

**Administrative Law Judge (ALJ)** (Proposition F): A hearing officer who presides over hearings and appeals involving government agencies.

**Amend** (Propositions C, D and F): To change.

**Assets** (Proposition F): Anything owned, such as property or a bank account, that has monetary value.

**Audit** (Proposition B): A formal examination of financial or management accounts and information.

**Bond** (Propositions A, B and G): A bond is a promise by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a specific date. If the City needs to raise a large amount of money to pay for a library, sewer line, school, hospital or other project or program, it may borrow the money by selling bonds. (See also "General Obligation Bond")

**CalPERS** (Proposition D): The California Public Employees Retirement System, which manages retirement benefits for more than 1.6 million California public employees. Some San Francisco City employees participate in CalPERS retirement plans.

**Cause** (as in "removed for cause") (Proposition C): Official misconduct. Commissioners who may be "removed for cause" can be removed from office only for official misconduct.

**Charter Amendment** (Propositions C and D): A change to the City's Charter. The Charter is the City's Constitution. The Charter can only be changed by a majority of the votes cast.

**Compensation** (Proposition D): Salary and certain other payments to an employee. For the purpose of calculating retirement benefits for City employees, compensation generally excludes overtime pay. For some San Francisco employees hired before November 1976, compensation includes overtime.

**Declaration of Policy** (Proposition G): A statement or expression of the will of the voters.

**Early Voting:** Voting in person at City Hall before Election Day or mailing a vote-by-mail ballot before Election Day. See page 5 for more information.

**Emergency Operations Center:** The citywide emergency operations center at 1011 Turk St. Some city agencies have their own departmental emergency operations centers.

**Exemption** (Proposition A): Freedom from an obligation or requirement that others must follow.

**Facilities** (Propositions A and B): Buildings or rooms used for particular purposes.

**Fiscal Year** (Proposition D): The City's 12-month budget period, starting July 1st and ending June 30th of the following calendar year.

**General Fund:** That part of the City's annual budget that can be used for any City purpose. Each year, the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors decide how the General Fund will be used. Money for the General Fund comes from property, business, sales, and other taxes and fees. Currently, the General Fund is 46% of the City's budget.

**General Obligation Bond** (Proposition B): A promise issued by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a certain date. When the City wants to raise money to pay for a large public project, it can borrow money by issuing General Obligation Bonds. The City then repays the money plus interest over a period of years with property taxes. General obligation bonds must be approved by the voters.

**Infrastructure** (Proposition B): The basic facilities and services needed for the functioning of a community, such as transportation and communications systems, and water and power lines.

**Ordinance** (Propositions C, E and F): A local law passed by the Board of Supervisors or by the voters.

**Oversight** (Proposition B): Watchful care or management; supervision.

**Parcel Tax** (Proposition A): A tax that is based on a flat fee for each unit of real property that receives a separate tax bill.

**Pass-through** (Proposition B): To recover an increase in property taxes by passing on a portion of the cost to tenants.

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**Police Command Center** (Proposition B): Police Department headquarters, which houses command staff, departmental emergency operations center, and administrative and planning functions.

**Proposition** (Propositions A–G): Any measure that is submitted to the voters for approval or disapproval.

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**Seismic** (Propositions A and B): Relating to earthquakes.

**SFERS** (Proposition D): The San Francisco Employee Retirement System, which manages retirement and deferred compensation plans for City employees.

**Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA)** (Proposition G): A local government agency created to design, build, and operate the Transbay Transit Center. The TJPA was established by state law and includes San Francisco and Bay Area representatives.

**Vote-by-Mail Ballots** (Frequently Asked Questions): Ballots mailed to voters or given to voters in person at the Department of Elections. Vote-by-mail ballots can be mailed to the Department of Elections, turned in at the Department of Elections office in City Hall, or turned in at any San Francisco polling place on Election Day. Also known as absentee ballots. See page 5 for more information.



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**Vote!**

November 2009

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Listed below are definitions of terms:

**Amend** (Propositions A-C, E) – To change.

**Audit** (Proposition D) – A formal examination of financial or management accounts and information.

**Certified Write-In Candidate** – A person who has completed the required paperwork and signatures for inclusion as a write-in candidate. Although the name of this person will not appear on the ballot, voters can vote for this person by writing the name of the person in the space on the ballot provided for write-in votes and following the specific ballot instructions. The Department of Elections counts write-in votes only for certified write-in candidates.

**Charter Amendment** (Propositions A-B) – A change to the City's Charter. The Charter is the City's Constitution. The Charter can only be changed by a majority of the votes cast.

**Declaration of Policy** (Proposition E) – A statement or expression of the will of the voters.

**Early Voting** – Voting in person at City Hall before Election Day or mailing a vote-by-mail ballot before Election Day. See page 7 for more information.

**Fiscal Year** (Proposition A) – The City's 12-month budget period, starting July 1st and ending June 30th of the following calendar year.

**Initiative** (Proposition D) – A proposition placed on the ballot by voters. Any voter may place an initiative on the ballot by gathering the required number of signatures on a petition.

**Municipal Code** (Proposition D) – City law, which includes San Francisco's Administrative Code, Planning Code, Elections

Code, Business and Tax Regulations Code and others.

**Net Revenues** (Proposition C) – The amount of money left after expenses of a transaction have been paid.

**Official Newspaper** (Proposition A) – A newspaper or newspapers selected annually by the Board of Supervisors to publish required public notices. They must be published for the dissemination of general local or national news, have a bona fide general circulation of at least 50,000 copies per calendar week and be printed in the City and County on three or more days in a calendar week.

**Ordinance** (Propositions A, C-E) – A local law passed by the Board of Supervisors or by the voters.

**Oversight** – Watchful care or management; supervision.

**Proposition** (Propositions A-E) – Any measure that is submitted to the voters for approval or disapproval.

**Rolling Two-Year Budget** (Proposition A) – The estimated revenues and costs of operating the City for two years, to be reviewed annually.

**Roof Sign** (Proposition D) – A sign or any portion thereof erected or painted on or over the roof covering any portion of a building, and either supported on the roof or on an independent structural frame or sign tower, or located on the side or roof of a penthouse, roof tank, roof shed, elevator housing or other roof structure. (San Francisco Planning Code Sec. 602.17.)

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## WORDS YOU NEED TO KNOW *(continued)*

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**Sign with Illumination (Proposition D) – Directly illuminated sign:** A sign designed to give forth artificial light directly (or through transparent or translucent material) from a source of light within such sign, including but not limited to neon and exposed lamp signs. (San Francisco Planning Code Sec. 602.4.); **Indirectly illuminated sign:** A sign illuminated with a light directed primarily toward such sign and so shielded that no direct rays from the light are visible elsewhere than on the lot where said illumination occurs. If not effectively so shielded, such sign shall be deemed to be a directly illuminated sign. (San Francisco Planning Code Sec. 602.11.)

**Video Sign (Proposition D) –** A sign that displays, emits, or projects or is readily capable of displaying, emitting or projecting a visual representation or image; an animated video, visual representation, or image; or other video image of any kind onto a building, fabric, screen, sidewalk, wall, or other surface through a variety of means, including, but not limited to: camera; computer; digital cinema, imaging, or video; electronic display; fiber optics; film; internet; intranet; light emitting diode screen or video display; microprocessor or microcontrolled based systems; picture frames; plasma display; projector; satellite; scrolling display; streaming video; telephony; television; VHS; wireless transmission; or other technology that can transmit animated or video images. (San Francisco Planning Code Sec. 602.21A.)

**Vote-by-Mail Ballots (Frequently Asked Questions) –** Ballots mailed to voters or given to voters in person at the Department of Elections. Vote-by-mail ballots can be mailed to the Department of Elections, turned in at the Department of Elections office in City Hall, or turned in at any San Francisco polling place on Election Day. Also known as absentee ballots. See page 7 for more information.

**Voting by Mail (Frequently Asked Questions) –** Also known as absentee voting. See page 7 for more information.

**Wall Sign (Proposition D) –** A sign painted directly on the wall or placed flat against a building wall with its copy parallel to the wall to which it is attached and not protruding more than the thickness of the sign cabinet. (San Francisco Planning Code Sec. 602.22.)

**Wind Sign (Proposition D) –** Any sign composed of two or more banners, flags, or other objects, mounted serially and fastened in such a manner as to move upon being subjected to pressure by wind or breeze. (San Francisco Planning Code Sec. 602.23.)



November 2008

# Words You Need to Know

by the Ballot Simplification Committee

## LISTED BELOW ARE DEFINITIONS OF TERMS:

**ABSENTEE (VOTE-BY-MAIL) BALLOTS (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)** — Ballots mailed to voters or given to voters in person at the Department of Elections. Absentee ballots can be mailed to the Department of Elections, turned in at the Department of Elections office in City Hall, or turned in at any San Francisco polling place on election day. Also known as vote-by-mail ballots. See page 7 for more information.

**ACUTE CARE (PROPOSITION A)** — Providing emergency services and general medical and surgical treatment for brief and severe disorders rather than long-term residential care for chronic illnesses.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING (PROPOSITIONS B AND N)** — Residential units that persons or households within a certain range of incomes would be able to afford.

**AMEND (PROPOSITIONS B-K AND M)** — To change.

**AUDIT (PROPOSITION A)** — A formal examination of financial or management accounts and information.

**BATTERY (PROPOSITION K)** — The willful and unlawful use of force or violence against another person.

**BOND (PROPOSITIONS A, D, H AND I)** — A bond is a promise by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a specific date. If the City needs to raise a large amount of money to pay for a library, sewer line, school, hospital or other project or program, it may borrow the money by selling bonds. (See also "General Obligation Bond" and "Revenue Bond".)

**BUDGETARY AND FISCAL PROVISIONS (PROPOSITION I)** — Provisions addressing financial resources, spending, and debt.

**CALIFORNIA SPECIAL SUBJECT TEACHING CREDENTIAL (PROPOSITION V)** — A state-issued certificate that authorizes a person to teach a particular subject.

**CHARTER AMENDMENT (PROPOSITIONS B-J)** — A change to the City's Charter. The Charter is the City's Constitution. The Charter can only be changed by a majority of the votes cast.

**CHARTER-CREATED BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS (PROPOSITION C)** — The following boards and commissions are created by the Charter: Airport Commission, Board of Appeals, Building Inspection Commission, Civil Service Commission, Commission

on Aging, Commission on the Environment, Commission on the Status of Women, Elections Commission, Entertainment Commission, Ethics Commission, Fire Commission, Health Commission, Human Rights Commission, Human Services Commission, Juvenile Probation Commission, Library Commission, Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors, Planning Commission, Police Commission, Port Commission, Public Utilities Commission, Recreation and Parks Commission, Rent Board, Small Business Commission and Taxi Commission.

**CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PROPOSITION C)** — A committee created by the City to obtain the input and views of San Franciscans. The following citizen advisory committees are created by the Charter: Municipal Transportation Agency Citizens' Advisory Council; Public Utilities Commission Citizens' Advisory Committee; Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund Citizens Advisory Committee; and Citizens Audit Review Board.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR (PROPOSITIONS E, H AND I)** — The City official responsible for managing services within the City's executive branch.

**CLEAN ENERGY (PROPOSITION H)** — Although there is no official definition, it is often used to refer to a source of energy that is either renewable, such as solar power or wind power, or emits very little pollution when it is generated.

**COMMON AREA (PROPOSITION M)** — An area that may be accessed or used by all tenants.

**CONSERVATION DISTRICT (PROPOSITION J)** — A geographical area legally designated to preserve and protect historical or natural resources.

**COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT (PROPOSITION S)** — An amount added to a base to adjust for inflation.

**DECLARATION OF POLICY (PROPOSITIONS U AND V)** — A statement or expression of the will of the voters.

**DEPLOYMENT (PROPOSITION U)** — The placement or stationing of troops.

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## WORDS YOU NEED TO KNOW *(continued)*

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**DOWNTOWN (PROPOSITION J)** — The area generally bounded by Washington or California streets on the north, Harrison or Folsom streets on the south, the Embarcadero on the east, and Fifth or Taylor on the west. The downtown also extends west for one block along Market Street to Van Ness Avenue. (see the City's Zoning Map, which is available on the City's website at [www.sfgov.org/site/planning\\_index.asp?id=35228](http://www.sfgov.org/site/planning_index.asp?id=35228))

**EARLY VOTING** — Voting in person at City Hall before election day or mailing an absentee ballot before election day. See page 7 for more information.

**EXEMPTION (PROPOSITIONS O AND Q)** — Freedom from an obligation or requirement that others must follow.

**EXTORTION (PROPOSITION K)** — The threat of physical force or fear against another person to obtain money or property.

**FELONY (PROPOSITION L)** — A major crime or offense that is punishable by a fine and/or a jail sentence of more than a year.

**FISCAL YEAR (PROPOSITIONS L AND S)** — The City's 12-month budget period, starting July 1<sup>st</sup> and ending June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following calendar year.

**GENERAL FUND (PROPOSITIONS N, O AND S)** — That part of the City's annual budget that can be used for any City purpose. Each year, the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors decide how the General Fund will be used. Money for the General Fund comes from property, business, sales, and other taxes and fees. Currently, the General Fund is 47% of the City's budget.

**GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND (PROPOSITION A)** — A promise issued by the City to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a certain date. When the City wants to raise money to pay for a large public project, it can borrow money by issuing General Obligation Bonds. The City then repays the money plus interest over a period of years with property taxes. General obligation bonds must be approved by the voters. (See also "Revenue Bond".)

**HISTORIC DISTRICT (PROPOSITION J)** — A geographical area legally designated to protect and preserve historic buildings and structures.

**HOTEL TAX (PROPOSITION D)** — A tax added to the rental of hotel rooms.

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING (PROPOSITION K)** — The transportation and sale of persons into forced labor.

**INFRASTRUCTURE (PROPOSITION D)** — The basic facilities and services needed for the functioning of a community, such as transportation and communications systems, and water and power lines.

**INITIATIVE (PROPOSITIONS K, V AND R)** — A proposition placed on the ballot by voters. Any voter may place an initiative on the ballot by gathering the required number of signatures on a petition.

**LANDLINE (PROPOSITION O)** — A telephone line such as metal wire or optic fibers.

**LOW AND MODERATE INCOME (PROPOSITION B)** — Annual incomes which fall within a specified range used to determine eligibility for specific programs or benefits.

**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF HOUSING (PROPOSITION B)** — The Mayor's Office of Housing coordinates efforts to maximize housing opportunities for low-income households and individuals. It administers a variety of housing programs funded by federal, state, and local sources. It also works to coordinate the efforts of federal, state, and local housing agencies.

**MEDIAN INCOME (PROPOSITION B)** — A level of income based on all incomes earned within San Francisco. Half of all San Francisco households have incomes above this level and half have incomes below this level.

**MISDEMEANOR (PROPOSITION L)** — A minor crime or offense that is punishable by a fine and/or a jail sentence of one year or less.

**MIXED USE AREA (PROPOSITION D)** — An area where there are multiple significant uses such as housing, office buildings, retail, and industrial uses, and open space and parks.

**ORDINANCE (PROPOSITIONS K-T)** — A local law passed by the Board of Supervisors or by the voters.

**OVERSIGHT (PROPOSITION A)** — Watchful care or management; supervision.

**PARENTAL LEAVE (PROPOSITION G)** — Policy that allows parents to temporarily leave their jobs to care for a child.

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## WORDS YOU NEED TO KNOW *(continued)*

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**PASS-THROUGH (PROPOSITION A)** — To recover an increase in property taxes by passing on a portion of the cost to tenants.

**PLANNING COMMISSION (PROPOSITION J)** — The City commission responsible for adopting and maintaining a comprehensive, long term general plan for future improvement and development of the City.

**PROPOSITION (PROPOSITIONS A-V)** — Any measure that is submitted to the voters for approval or disapproval.

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (PUC) (PROPOSITIONS H, I AND R)** — A City agency that provides water, wastewater, and municipal power services to San Francisco.

**PUBLIC UTILITY (PROPOSITIONS C, H, I AND R)** — A privately owned company that provides utility services to the general public, such as an electric company, cable company, or bus line. State law regulates public utilities.

**QUALIFIED WRITE-IN CANDIDATE** — A person who has completed the required paperwork and signatures for inclusion as a write-in candidate. Although the name of this person will not appear on the ballot, voters can vote for this person by writing the name of the person in the space on the ballot provided for write-in votes and following the specific ballot instructions. The Department of Elections counts write-in votes only for qualified write-in candidates.

**RECALL (PROPOSITIONS E AND F)** — The process by which voters can remove an elected official from office.

**REFERENDUM (PROPOSITION F)** — The process by which voters can overturn legislation enacted by a governing body such as the Board of Supervisors.

**REVENUE BOND (PROPOSITION H)** — If the City needs money to pay for something, such as the construction or repair of a facility, the City may borrow the money by selling bonds. The City pays back the money with interest. Revenue bonds are bonds that are paid back using money such as fees collected by the department which issued the bonds. These bonds are not repaid with property tax money. (See also "General Obligation Bond".)

**SALES TAX (PROPOSITION P)** — A tax added to the sale of certain retail goods.

**SAN FRANCISCO MEDIAN INCOME (PROPOSITION B)** — See "Median Income".

**SEISMIC (PROPOSITIONS A AND N)** — Relating to earthquakes.

**SET-ASIDE (PROPOSITIONS B AND S)** — The amount of money in the City's budget that must be used for a particular purpose.

**SEX WORKERS (PROPOSITION K)** — Prostitutes or other people who work in the sex industry.

**SIGNATURE REQUIREMENTS (PROPOSITION E)** — The number of signatures required by law.

**TERM (PROPOSITIONS E, F, J AND P)** — The period of time for which a public official may hold his or her office.

**TRAUMA CENTER (PROPOSITION A)** — A hospital equipped to provide comprehensive emergency medical services.

**VOTING BY MAIL (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)** — Also known as absentee voting. See page 7 for more information.

