



# San Bernardino County

## Legislation Text

**File #: 3041, Agenda Item #: 36**

### REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO AND RECORD OF ACTION

**October 6, 2020**

#### **FROM**

**BOB PAGE, Registrar of Voters, Registrar of Voters**

#### **SUBJECT**

Registrar of Voters Budgetary Adjustments for Fiscal Year 2020-21.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Approve budget adjustments in the amount of \$22.2 million to appropriation and \$3.8 million to revenue in the Registrars of Voters Department's 2020-21 budget and authorize the Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector to post the necessary budget adjustments, as detailed in the Financial Impact Section, for election related expenses for the 2020 Presidential General Election (Four votes required).

(Presenter: Bob Page, Registrar of Voters, 387-2100)

#### **COUNTY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**Operate in a Fiscally-Responsible and Business-Like Manner.**

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Approval of this item will result in the use of additional Discretionary General Funding (Net County Cost). The Registrar of Voters (ROV) requests budget adjustments to the 2020-21 budget as reflected in the table below to provide sufficient appropriation for costs associated with one-time November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election and related COVID-19 expenses.

Funds Center	Commitment Item/ GL Account	Description	Action	Amount	WBSE
6800001000	52002135	Special Dept. Expense	Increase	\$5,229,107	N/A
6800001000	52002445	Other Professional Services	Increase	\$16,966,672	N/A
6800001000	40408840	Grant Revenue - State Other	Increase	\$3,813,672	N/A
	37008754	Annual Elections Cycle Reserve	Decrease	\$7,653,351	N/A
1280001000	56006000	Contingencies	Decrease	\$10,728,756	N/A

ROV's 2020-21 budget included \$4.8 million in Net County Cost for staffing; \$2.9 million from the New Voting

System Reserve for capital expenditures for the County's new voting system; and an \$11 million annual allocation for ongoing operational costs, including election expenses and system, equipment, and software license and support requirements. In addition, one-time Discretionary General Funding totaling \$7.7 million was set aside to create a new special purpose Annual Elections Cycle Reserve.

At the time the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted the budget, ROV anticipated requesting a budget adjustment of \$3.1 million to draw down funds from the Reserve to finance the total cost of the 2020 Presidential General Election. The amount of the recommended budget adjustment has grown for several reasons.

Prior to COVID-19, ROV estimated 2020 Presidential General Election expenses would be \$11 million. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and new State mandates, the cost estimate for the election has increased by an additional \$16.9 million.

On July 28, 2020 (Items No. 75 and 76), the Board adopted two ordinances to place a County Charter revision (Measure J) and a petition initiative to amend the Board compensation and term limit provisions in the County Charter (Measure K) on the ballot for this election. The Board also directed ROV to print the full text of both measures in the Voter Information Guide (VIG). This has increased ROV's cost to print and mail the VIGs for this election by \$1.6M.

In August, ROV terminated an agreement with a delivery and courier services vendor and issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure services from a new vendor. No vendors responded to the RFP. ROV estimates the cost to hire staff and rent and fuel vehicles will increase the cost of delivery and courier services by \$600,000 for this election. ROV plans to staff these services with a combination of County employees loaned from other departments and temporary workers from employment agency contractors.

The COVID-19 expenses are eligible for reimbursement from the State's budget allocation of \$3,813,672 to the County for election-related COVID-19 costs. The remaining expenses will be funded by the Annual Elections Cycle Reserve (\$7.7 million) and Contingencies (\$10.7 million). The expenses may also be eligible for reimbursement from the County's Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Coronavirus Relief Funds if no other COVID-19 related federal or state funding is available.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Presidential General Election generates the highest voter participation and the highest costs in the four-year election cycle. Additionally, the 2020 Presidential General Election will be more expensive than the 2016 Presidential General Election, because the number of registered voters in the county has increased from 888,019 to 1,084,760 and State requirements for conducting elections have changed and grown in the past four years.

To improve the financing of election costs, the 2020-21 budget included a new approach to ROV's budget:

- An annual allocation for ongoing operational costs, including election expenses
- A special purpose reserve for ROV to draw from in years when election expenses exceed the annual allocation and to grow in years when election expenses are less

Recognizing this financial approach was being implemented in the most expensive election year in the four-year cycle, the special purpose reserve was seeded with funds.

ROV's 2020-21 budget, however, did not include funding for COVID-19 impacts and new State mandates for the 2020 Presidential General Election. These impacts have caused one-time costs for this election to increase by more than 150%, including labor, supplies, equipment, printing, mailing, professional services, and advertising. These expenses will help ensure the election is accessible, secure and safe for voters and election workers alike.

On May 8, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order (EO) N-64-20 requiring counties to mail a ballot to all registered voters during the 2020 Presidential General Election. Subsequently, the Governor issued EO N-67-20 and signed Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 423, which together direct county election officials on how they must conduct this election during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The additional election components addressed by the mandates in the EOs and legislation include:

- Minimum number of polling places, ballot drop off locations, and hours of operation
- Siting criteria and a 10-day public review and comment period of the proposed polling place and ballot drop off locations
- Minimum ballot and envelope supplies
- A system to permit all voters to track their mail ballot from issuance to counting
- Additional time for the United States Postal Service to deliver voted mail ballots postmarked by Election Day to county elections officials
- Community engagement and voter education program

The State's minimum requirements for voting locations are the primary factor driving one-time labor cost increases.

With assistance from the County Administrative Office, Real Estate Services Department, County Superintendent of Schools, city officials, and community religious leaders, ROV worked diligently over several months to secure polling places for this election, contacting past partners and reaching out to potential new ones. Due to COVID-19, many of the polling places used in past elections were not available to ROV for this election.

ROV will operate 210 polling places for the 2020 Presidential General Election, which is double the minimum of 105 required by the State, but about half the number used in the 2020 Presidential Primary Election. To provide access to voters with fewer facilities, polling places used in this election must be open for four days - Saturday, October 31 through Tuesday, November 3.

ROV requires a budget adjustment to Services and Supplies in order to purchase the necessary election supplies and services to conduct this election.

The Board has previously approved the following COVID expenses related to this election:

1. Purchase of two additional high speed scanners for the central counting component of the County's voting system to accommodate additional mail ballots (July 14, Item No. 24).
2. Communication strategies and support services from Westbound Communications for engaging and informing registered voters regarding the Election (August 11, 2020, Item No. 21).

On August 11, 2020 (Item No. 46), the Board approved the template agreement with the Secretary of State for election-related coronavirus cost reimbursement in the amount of \$3,813,672. Execution of the agreement is expected to occur before Election Day. A budget adjustment is necessary to realize the grant revenue for coronavirus expenditures.

## **PROCUREMENT**

Not Applicable.

## **REVIEW BY OTHERS**

This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Jolena Grider, Deputy County Counsel, 387-4310) on September 14, 2020; Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector (Erika Gomez, General Accounting Manager, 382-3196) on September 17, 2020; Finance (Elias Duenas, Administrative Analyst, 387-4052) on September 29, 2020; and County Finance and Administration (Robert Saldana, Deputy Executive Officer, 387-5423) on

September 30, 2020.