

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

0220-04980-0002

Date: October 8, 2014

To: Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

From: Miguel A. Santana, City Administrative Officer

Sharon M. Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst

Subject: **CAO/CLA FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS REFORM COMMISSION REPORT (C.F. NO. 13-1364)**

On September 19, 2014, your Committee instructed the Offices of the City Administrative Officer and Chief Legislative Analyst to provide supplemental information relative to our joint report regarding the Municipal Elections Reform Commission's (MERC) recommendations on enhancing voter participation and civic engagement in the City of Los Angeles. A report regarding the Committee's instruction on options to implement a voter drawing to increase voter participation will be transmitted separately. The following are responses to eight of the Committee's nine questions referred to our offices for report:

1. MERC Recommendation 1: Provide a cost estimate for the administration of special elections in 2019 and 2021 for an 18-month term.

The City Clerk's Office has provided an estimate to administer special elections in 2019 and 2021 for an 18-month term, based on the actual and projected costs for the 2013 and 2015 municipal elections.

Estimated Special Election Costs		
Election Year	Offices	Estimated Cost
2019	Even CDs, Odd LAUSD, and LACCD	\$17.6 million
2021	Mayor, City Attorney, Controller, Odd CDs, Even LAUSD, and LACCD	\$18.7 million

The administration of a special election in 2019 for even numbered Council Districts, odd numbered districts for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) would cost approximately \$17.6 million. A special election in 2021 for the Offices of Mayor, City Attorney, Controller, odd numbered Council Districts, even numbered districts for the LAUSD, and LACCD would cost approximately \$18.7 million. The Council may call a special election by ordinance at any time, according to Section 104 of the City's Election Code.

2. Beginning with the 2000 Municipal Election, how many measures have the City placed on a County administered election ballot? What was the cost of placing said measures on each ballot?

According to the City Clerk, 10 City ballot measures have been consolidated with the County since 2000. A breakdown of the costs by year is provided below:

YEAR	MEASURE(S)	COUNTY	CITY COST*	TOTAL
November 2000	F	N/A (No records found)		
March 2002	Q, R	\$2,132,416	\$540,072	\$2,672,488**
November 2004	O	\$1,745,173	\$424,346	\$2,169,519
November 2006	H, J, R	\$2,440,305	\$668,551	\$3,108,856
February 2008	S	2,481,675	\$451,893	\$2,933,568
November 2008	A, B	\$1,889,291	\$504,559	\$2,393,850

*Does not include Regular Permanent Staff Salaries.

** Includes cost of CD 2 runoff.

3. Beginning with the 2000 Municipal Election, how many special elections has the City administered for Council or Citywide offices? What was the cost of each election?

Since the year 2000, the City or County has administered 12 special elections for Council and citywide offices. The cost of each election is reflected below:

Office	Administered by	Election Type	Dates	Costs	Considerations
CD 4	City	Primary & Run off	9/11/01 10/23/01	\$680,246	Combined primary/run off costs.
CD 2	City County	Primary Run off	2/11/01 3/05/02	\$464,649 \$2,672,488*	*Includes City's and County's cost for runoff and 2 measures.
CDs 10 &14	County	Primary	11/08/05	\$675,389	Consolidated with State's special election.
LAUSD 2	City County	Primary Run off	3/07/06 6/06/06	\$1,527,175 \$345,731	Consolidated with State's Gubernatorial election.
CD 2	City	Primary & Run off	9/22/09 12/08/09	\$997,670	Combined primary/run off costs.
CD 15	City	Primary & Run off	11/08/11 1/17/12	\$1,064,335	Combined primary/run off costs.
CD 6	City	Run off	7/23/13	\$409,103	Primary was consolidated with the May 2013 elections. Total includes primary cost.

4. MERC Recommendation 5: Provide a cost analysis of implementing a targeted voter registration effort toward neighborhoods with lower voter registration rates.

In order to implement a targeted voter registration effort in neighborhoods with lower voter registration rates, the City Clerk would require additional funding in the following two areas:

A) Additional position authorities – the City Clerk estimated requiring funding in the amount of \$228,720 for salaries, overtime, and expenses. The additional staff request includes a total of five new full time position authorities for two Principal Election Clerk and three Senior Election Clerk positions to provide a minimum of six events per month, which would include a combination of events hosted by the City, community, or the County.

B) Contractor Funding – an outside vendor would need to be selected through an RFP process to review Geographic Information Systems (GIS), U.S. Census, and Voter Registration Data, and to perform an analysis of said data to determine the areas which have the largest concentrations of eligible, but unregistered, voters. The vendor costs would be recurring as precinct lines change from election to election. The estimated cost to provide these recurring services is not yet available.

It is recommended that requests for additional staff and expense funding be reviewed through the annual budgetary process.

5. MERC Recommendation 19: Provide a cost analysis of funding programs that enhance voter awareness of elections and promoting a culture of voting.

The City Clerk states that \$228,720 for salaries, overtime, and expenses for two Principal Election Clerk and three Senior Election Clerk positions would be required to provide a civics education program which would include hosting voter education forums/town halls, mock elections, and producing a Civics 101 quick guide handbook, and other materials. This cost would be in addition to the positions and funding requested in the response to item no. 4.

It is recommended that requests for additional staff and expense funding be reviewed through the annual budgetary process.

6. MERC Recommendation 21: Provide a cost analysis of implementing the ten recommendations included in the City Clerk's Alternative Voting Methods report.

The City Clerk has indicated that the majority of the recommendations can be implemented with the current level of staff and funding. Of the ten recommendations provided in the City Clerk's report only, the recommendation to increase the use of traditional media would require additional funds. The new inmate voting program and implementation of same day registration for City elections may also have additional costs; however, the City Clerk does not have current estimates for potential costs.

Currently, the City Clerk partners with businesses, and has \$55,000 in funding for print advertisement and video public service announcements, both of which are provided in 11 languages. In order to provide additional advertising in television, print, radio, billboards, bus shelters, and street banner ads, the City Clerk estimates that \$122,000 would be required. This estimated cost is based on airing television ads during non-prime time periods. The cost of running ads during prime time hours (Mon-Fri, 8pm-11pm), varies per advertising package for

each television channel, network, and cable company. However, airing ads during prime time periods can be twice as expensive as non-prime time hours, yet would likely be more effective.

It is recommended that this request for additional funding be reviewed through the annual budgetary process.

The following summarizes the ten recommendations and additional cost requirements:

	Recommendation	Additional Cost
1	Target outreach events to areas of the City that experience the lowest turnout	No additional funds required.
2	Implement a new inmate voting program	The City Clerk is currently developing the program. The cost is unknown at this time.
3	Simplify and use plain language for all election materials	No additional funds required.
4	Partner with local voter advocacy groups to develop creative messaging	No additional funds required.
5	Expand the use of social media, and partnerships with local businesses and other City departments	No additional funds required.
6	Submit a budget package for Mayor and Council consideration to increase traditional media presence	No additional funds required to request. The cost to increase the City's traditional media presence for elections is estimated to be \$122,000.
7	Increase focus on voter education and expand the civic component of the education curriculum	No additional funds required.
8	Partner with the City's Department on Disability (DOD) to perform a thorough review of election processes to support accessible elections	No additional funds required.
9	Increase registration activities	No additional funds required if done in partnership with other agencies and organizations.
10	Seek to implement same-day registration for City elections, once permitted in California	Program cannot be implemented until statewide voter registration database is completed. The cost is unknown at this time.

7. MERC Recommendation 23: Cost analysis to expand use of video communications, in addition to Public Service Announcements (PSA).

The City Clerk estimates that the cost for the production of additional video communications would require \$13,000 for each video. Please see below for a breakdown of costs:

Video Production	\$3,000
Closed Caption (in 12 languages)	\$8,000
Translations	\$2,000
Total	\$13,000

Non-PSA video communications would be used to create “how to” videos in order to educate voters on the details of registration, locations of polling places, etc. These videos could be published on social media sites, as well as the websites of City partners. If the City Clerk were to implement this for the 2017 Municipal Elections, or for subsequent elections, no additional staff would be necessary.

8. MERC Recommendation 32: Provide further cost analysis to provide pre-paid postage on Vote-By-Mail ballot envelopes.

The cost of providing pre-paid postage on Vote-By-Mail (VBM) ballots would vary based on whether first class postage stamps (stamps) or Business Reply Mail (BRM) is used as the form of pre-paid postage. Using stamps as the form of pre-paid postage would result in an additional cost for all VBM return envelopes sent to voters. In contrast, when BRM is used, the City would only incur a cost when the VBM ballot envelope is returned.

During the 2013 primary and general municipal elections, the City Clerk mailed a total of 1,422,114 VBM ballots, with a VBM return rate of 24 percent¹. The cost of providing pre-paid postage at 2013 VBM return levels, using 2014 postage rates, would be approximately \$697,000 for stamps, or \$167,000 if a BRM account was used, for each VBM return envelope.

The City Clerk estimates an increase in the number of VBMs to be sent during the 2015 Municipal Elections of more than 10 percent as a result of projected increases in registration. With an assumption of at least 1,600,000 VBM ballots to be mailed, a return rate of 24 percent, and a postage rate increase of \$0.01 per stamp, the cost of providing pre-paid postage would be \$800,000 for stamps, or \$192,000 for providing BRM on VBM return envelopes. These represent revised estimates for prepaid postage costs.

If Council were to provide funding for pre-paid postage for the 2015 Municipal Elections, the City Clerk would require an additional appropriation of either \$840,000 for stamps, or \$202,000 if BRM is used, for each VBM return envelope. The estimate includes a five percent contingency in the event of potential cost overruns which may occur as the result of possible higher return projections or increase in postage costs.

¹ Return percentage is for mailed VBMs only in 2013. The combined return rate for 2013 VBMs which are returned to the polls, and for mailed VBMs, is 27%