

**ORDINANCE NO. ()**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ADDING DIVISION 12 TO ARTICLE II OF CHAPTER 2 OF THE SONOMA COUNTY CODE TO CREATE A STAND-ALONE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS DEPARTMENT; PROVIDING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS; AND MAKING CORRESPONDING CHANGES TO DIVISION 2, CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE II TO SHIFT THE SUPERVISION OF THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS UNDER THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

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The Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, State of California, ordains as follows:

**Section I. *Legislative Purpose.*** Historically, the County Clerk has served as the ex-officio Registrar of Voters for the County of Sonoma (“County”). The County Clerk was a separate department until 2001, when the Board of Supervisors (“Board”) consolidated the County Clerk with the Recorder’s Office. In October of 2001, the Board additionally consolidated the newly formed Clerk-Recorder’s Office with the Assessor to create the Clerk-Recorder-Assessor Department. In 2004, the Board further reorganized the Clerk-Recorder-Assessor by separating the Clerk of the Board and Public Conservator | Public Guardian functions from the department. The department head for the consolidated Clerk-Recorder-Assessor Department is currently elected, but statutorily, only the Assessor is required to be elected.

This Board adopted a five-year Specific Plan in March 2021. The Specific Plan consists of five pillars, including Organizational Excellence. The Organizational Excellence pillar commits the County to providing superior public service to Sonoma County residents. The Board finds that to serve Sonoma County residents and fulfill the County’s state and federal mandates, the County organization must be efficient and effective, fiscally responsible, and accountable. Elections functions are complicated to manage due to the large scope, sensitive nature of the work, and increasing complexity. Additionally, elections legislation, regulations, and the overall election environment have changed rapidly during the last decade and are continuing to evolve and impact the administration of elections. Further, election officials and offices across the nation are experiencing an unprecedented era of scrutiny, doubt, attack, and aggressive tactics to undermine democracy. The Registrar of Voters is no longer responsible solely for administering elections but must also anticipate and mitigate potential threats to election credibility and democratic integrity. Challenges from the electorate and election deniers have increased the demands on the office, including a surge in public records requests, legal challenges, threats, and heightened public interest in election processes.

Having reviewed the information presented by the Clerk-Recorder-Assessor, this Board finds and declares that it would promote efficient and effective government, and is therefore in the public interest, to provide for appointment of the Registrar of Voters by the Board, and to establish a stand-alone Registrar of Voters Department. If the Registrar of Voters were spun off from the larger Clerk-Recorder-Assessor department, the

position could dedicate greater focus to expanding and enhancing voter engagement, election security, and accessibility initiatives, as well as responding to increasing public records requests and election observation. An appointed Registrar of Voters would report to the County Executive Officer and prioritize competency over political popularity. It would ensure that only the most qualified professionals lead this office, free from partisan pressures and focused solely on serving the public.

**Section II.** *Division 12 added to Article II of Chapter 2 of the Sonoma County Code.*  
Division 12 is hereby added to Article II of Chapter 2 of the Sonoma County Code to read in its entirety as follows:

**“Division 12. – Registrar of Voters.**

**Sec. 2-33.30. – Creation.**

The registrar of voters division is hereby separated from the office of clerk-recorder-assessor, and an independent department designated as the “registrar of voters” is hereby established. Such department shall be led by an appointed official who shall be designated “the registrar of voters.”

**Sec. 2-33.31. – Generally—Appointment—Compensation.**

There is in the county an office designated as “the registrar of voters.” Such office is a part of the classified service under the county civil service regulations. The board of supervisors shall appoint the registrar of voters, with a salary set by such board. The registrar of voters shall be overseen and report to the county executive.

**Sec. 2-33.32. - Qualifications.**

The registrar of voters shall have demonstrated their ability to oversee county elections functions through possession of any combination of experience, training, and education that would provide an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and abilities listed in the job classification specification. A typical way for the registrar of voters to demonstrate their ability would be evidenced by either two (2) years of experience as an elections manager, assistant, or chief deputy registrar of voters, or equivalent position in a State of California elections department, or four (4) years’ full-time experience performing administrative/managerial functions, which includes the development and interpretation of laws, regulations, policies, and procedures in the field of elections in a public agency. Possession of a bachelor’s degree in public administration, business, sociology, economics, political science, or a related field from an accredited college or university may be substituted for two years of managerial/administrative work experience in a public agency.

**Sec. 2-33.33. – Transfer of powers, duties and responsibilities.**

The registrar of voters shall perform all duties of the office assigned by law or the board, and the elected clerk-recorder-assessor is relieved of those powers, duties, and responsibilities upon the effective date of this ordinance.

**Sec. 2-33.34. – Effective date.**

This division shall become operative and take full effect on July 1, 2025.”

**Section III.** *Amendments to Division 2 of Article II of Chapter 2 of the Sonoma County Code.* Division 2 of Article II of Chapter 2 of the Sonoma County Code is amended by amending subparagraph (g) of Section 2-8 (Powers, duties, and responsibilities) to read as follows:

**“Sec. 2-8. – Powers, duties and responsibilities.**

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(g) Within the limitations established by law or by the board, oversee all central administrative services and supervise department heads of the county's agriculture, weights and measures department; child support services department; community development commission; economic development board; emergency management; department of health services; human resources department; human services department; Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach; information systems department; Permit Sonoma; public defender; public infrastructure department; probation department; regional parks department; registrar of voters department; and for any other county position designated by resolution or ordinance of the board.”

**Section IV.** *Amendments to Division 2 of Article II of Chapter 2 of the Sonoma County Code.* Division 2 of Article II of Chapter 2 of the Sonoma County Code is amended by amending subparagraph (h) of Section 2-8 (Powers, duties, and responsibilities) to read as follows:

**“Sec. 2-8. – Powers, duties and responsibilities.**

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(h) Be appointing authority (appoint and dismiss authority) for the executive director of the community development commission; the director of economic development; the emergency management director; the equity officer; the director of health services; the human resources director; the human services director; the director of information services; the director of Permit Sonoma; the director of public infrastructure; the director of regional parks; the registrar of voters; and for any other county position designated by resolution or ordinance of the board of supervisors.

**Section V.** If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the

validity of the remaining portion of this Ordinance. The Board of Supervisors hereby declares that it would have passed this Ordinance and every section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase thereof irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses or phrases be declared unconstitutional or invalid.

**Section VI.** This Ordinance shall be and the same is hereby declared to be in full force and effect from and after July 1, 2025, and shall be published once before the expiration of fifteen (15) days after passage, with the names of the Supervisors voting for or against the same, in *The Press Democrat*, a newspaper of general circulation published in the County of Sonoma, State of California.

In regular session of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, introduced on the 28th day of January, 2025, and finally passed and adopted this \_\_\_\_ day February, 2025, on regular roll call of the members of said Board by the following vote:

**SUPERVISORS**

: Hermosillo:    Rabbitt:                    Coursey:                    Gore:                    Hopkins:

Ayes:                                    Noes:                                    Absent:                                    Abstain:

**WHEREUPON**, the Chair declared the above and foregoing Ordinance duly adopted and

**SO ORDERED.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Board of Supervisors  
County of Sonoma

ATTEST:

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M. Christina Rivera,  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors