



Legislation Text

File #: 2019-1697, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County of Sonoma Clerk Recorder Assessor

Staff Name and Phone Number: Ray Leonard - 565-1880

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Clerk Recorder Assessor Position Allocation Change- Elections Services Supervisor

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Resolution amending the County Clerk-Recorder-Assessor department allocation list to add 1.0 FTE Elections Services Supervisor in the Registrar of Voters division effective December 17, 2019.

Executive Summary:

The Sonoma County Registrar of Voters has one of the most significant and complex responsibilities of County Government: to run secure and fair elections that give a voice to the public and pass measures, initiatives, propositions and elect officials to serve the public. In the past 10 years, staff reductions have eliminated three Election Services Supervisors and one Election Specialist. In that same period, there has been an increase in the number of elections, increased number of voters, and more than 20 new mandates from the state that affect elections processes. With only 12 staff and 2 managers dedicated to elections operations, the overall leadership, management and election process will benefit from the addition of an Election Services Supervisor to help support staff and distribute workload. The request for additional permanent staffing and increased ongoing General Fund support was not included in the FY 2019-20 budget requests because the department was already facing potential layoffs in all divisions due to budget reductions, the new election system had not yet been implemented, and the office was in a period of management transition. This addition cannot wait until FY 2020-21 budget hearings because the 2020 election cycle will be the most complex election faced yet, due to ongoing law changes and legal mandates, the increase in workload, and threats to elections such as natural disasters, cyber-attacks and misinformation campaigns. The department plans to pay for the cost of the position through salary savings from the Special Projects Director retiring early (funded by the Registrar of Voters ACO trust) for this Fiscal Year. In addition, the department is willing to support the ongoing cost of this critical position in FY 20-21 by making cuts in other areas of the budget, such as laying off a position or reducing services and supplies.

Discussion:

Over the last 10 years, the Sonoma County Registrar of Voters has reduced election staff in response to budget cuts by eliminating three Elections Services Supervisors and 1 Election Specialist. Meanwhile the California State Legislature and the Secretary of State have added more than 20 updates and mandates to the elections processes. Currently, direct supervision of staff is a responsibility of the Chief Deputy Registrar of Voters and the Elections Manager. This removes capacity for other responsibilities, such as managing the overall operations of the office and elections, reviewing potential and future legislation to plan for operational

changes, and planning and implementing changes as required by the every changing state law.

The Registrar of Voters Office has seen a large increase in regular workload over the last eight years, unrelated to unfunded mandates. There has been an 83% increase in the number of ballots returned and that need to be processed, a 199% increase in ballots that have been challenged and need to be researched, 121% increase in provisional ballots that need to be individually researched, and in the last year a 462% increase in conditional voter registration. Conversely, in the same period, there has been a 7% decrease in staffing.

The Elections Services Supervisor position would be responsible for day-to-day supervision of staff, assistance in training staff, coverage of sick/vacation time, and assist with workflow processes throughout the Registrar of Voters Office. Additionally, the supervisor will supervise seasonal Extra Help staff during key election readiness periods, and provide back up to the Senior Election Specialists who cover the most complex aspects of the election, as well as assist in development of procedures. This allocation would also allow for the growth of internal candidates into management staff in the future. Currently, there is no way for internal staff to receive the supervisory experience necessary to move into management positions.

The addition of a Supervisor would remove the majority of day to day supervisory tasks from management, and allow them to focus on successfully running the elections; tracking, and analyzing and implementing changes to procedures related to changing election legislation and technologies; discovering and implementing process improvements; and designing and implementing mandated outreach activities. With the increase in legislation affecting the processes and requirements related to elections, the managers need to be able to focus on the management duties, as opposed to supervision. Taking advantage of the efficiencies offered by adding this position would benefit the voters of Sonoma County and improve the overall elections process.

The constant change in election law adds to the complexity of elections in general, and the number of unfunded mandates that have been legislated over the last few years have added a large number of new requirements to successfully complete elections. By providing a backup to the senior staff members in the Registrar of Voters Office who handle the most complex tasks and responsibilities, the Elections Services Supervisor will alleviate stress on the Registrar of Voters Office, as a whole.

The following is a partial list of the updates and mandates that have been added over the last 10 years:

- **Military & Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act - 2009**
 - Expanded the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act to provide greater protections to service members, their families, and other overseas citizens
- **Voter Pre-Registration for 16 and 17 year-olds**
 - County Elections Officials monitor these voters and ensure that they are notified to vote when they turn 18

- **Postage Plus Three - 2016**
 - Allows Vote By Mail ballots to be counted if postmarked and received within three days of Election Day
 - Has the effect of shortening the time for certifying, but not the responsibilities, tasks and duties related to certification
- **Eight Day Cure - Missing Signature on Vote By Mail Envelope - 2016**
 - Requires Elections Official to provide outreach to voters who did not sign the ballot return envelope -
 - Allowed for voters to provide a missing signature within eight days after Election Day
- **Vote By Mail Ballot May Be Delivered to Any County in the State - 2017**
 - No later than eight days after receipt, County Elections Officials shall forward the ballot to the county in which the ballot was issued
 - Requires office to sort Vote By Mail ballots turned into polling places and mail those ballots to multiple other counties
- **California Voting For All Act - Requires Non-English Facsimile Ballots at Certain Polling Places - 2018**
 - The County is now required to provide facsimile ballots in Spanish, Tagalog, Khmer, and Vietnamese
- **Eight Day Cure - Signature on Vote By Mail Envelope does not match - 2018**
 - Requires counties to provide outreach to voters when the signature on a Vote By Mail envelope does not match the signature on file
- **Voter Registration - New Motor Voter (AB1461) - 2018**
 - Allows DMV to register to vote any customer who is applying for a driver's license, making an address change, or renewing their licenses unless they choose to opt out of the process (voter registration in California is at an all-time high of 20M)
 - This increases the number of registrations that staff are required to process
- **Conditional Voter Registration - 2018**
 - Allows voters to register and cast a provisional ballot after the close of registration and on Election Day

- Many thousands of voters took advantage of this new law in 2018, and many counties had several hour-long waits for people looking to register in the days leading up to and on Election Day
- This added over 800 data entry tasks onto voter registration staff in the days immediately surrounding the election, and during the certification period
- **Extension to Eight Day Cure - Missing Signature on Vote By Mail Envelope - 2018**
 - Secretary of State extended the missing signature cure time period to 28 days
- **Prepaid Postage on All Returned Vote By Mail Ballots - 2019**
 - Requires counties to pay for postage on all returned VBM ballots and to ensure that USPS processes timely returns on election-related material
- **Increasing No Party Preference (NPP) Registration**
 - New Motor Voter driving a significant increase in NPP registration across the State and in County
 - County Elections are required to provide outreach to all NPP voters prior to Primary election and notify them of party ballot choices
 - Registrar anticipates a significant workload as NPP voters realize they are not able to vote for a Presidential candidate and choose to re-register on Election Day.

The future of elections bring even more to the workload of staff. There are several new laws and procedures that will add additional protections and elections accessibility to the voters of California over the next few years, while also increasing workload and election responsibilities. These future laws and procedures include providing remote access for Vote by Mail voters that are disabled, overseas or active military, allowing voters to conditionally register to vote at the polling places, and allowing voters registered as No Party Preference to request a party ballot or re-register and request a party ballot. Sonoma County will also be required to go through the redistricting process in 2021, which will likely trigger a Bilingual Designation for our county, increasing responsibilities related to outreach, translations, proofing and printing.

Additionally, Sonoma County can opt to implement the Voters Choice Act (VCA) after 2020, which would change how and when voters are allowed to vote. Implementing the VCA would necessitate a large amount of planning and outreach to the community. It would include the use of Vote Centers with early voting and all Vote by Mail voting.

The complexity of elections has increased significantly over the past 10 years, and staffing in the Registrar of Voters Office needs to increase as well to ensure that elections are successful. Adding an allocation for the

Elections Services Supervisor would prepare the Registrar of Voters Office and the County of Sonoma for the future.

This critical position will be pivotal to the success of elections in Sonoma County. The department has recognized this critical need by considering the ongoing cost of this position by considering cutting services, supplies or positions to cover this cost.

Prior Board Actions:

None

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 19-20 Adopted	FY20-21 Projected	FY 21-22 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	79,806	140,488	140,488
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF	79,806	140,488	140,488
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	79,806	140,488	140,488

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

For FY 19-20 the department proposes funding this position with salary savings from the Special Projects Director retiring early (funded by the Registrar of Voters ACO trust). The department is willing to support the ongoing cost of this critical position in FY 20-21 by making cuts in other areas of the budget, such as laying off a position or reducing services and supplies.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
Elections Services Supervisor	4,886- 5,938	1	0

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Adding this allocation will allow the day-to-day supervision of staff to shift away from management, who can then focus on management priorities. Ideally, this position would be in place well before the March 2020 primary election, the timelines for which started on September 12, 2019, to ensure time to train the person

chosen for the position

Attachments:

Resolution

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None