

CODE TEXT

**ELECTIONS CODE - ELEC**

**DIVISION 21. STATE AND LOCAL REAPPORTIONMENT [21000 - 23004]**

*( Division 21 enacted by Stats. 1994, Ch. 920, Sec. 2. )*

**CHAPTER 7. City Elections [21600 - 21630]**

*( Chapter 7 enacted by Stats. 1994, Ch. 920, Sec. 2. )*

**ARTICLE 2. Chartered Cities [21620 - 21630]**

*( Article 2 enacted by Stats. 1994, Ch. 920, Sec. 2. )*

**21620.**

(a) This article applies to a charter city that elects members of the city's legislative body by districts or from districts, as defined in Section 34871 of the Government Code.

(b) This article shall not be interpreted to limit the discretionary remedial authority of any federal or state court.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 17. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

**21621.**

(a) Following a city's decision to elect its council using district-based elections, or following each federal decennial census for a city whose council is already elected using district-based elections, the council shall, by ordinance or resolution, adopt boundaries for all of the council districts of the city so that the council districts shall be substantially equal in population as required by the United States Constitution.

(1) Population equality shall be based on the total population of residents of the city as determined by the most recent federal decennial census for which the redistricting data described in Public Law 94-171 are available.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), an incarcerated person, as that term is used in Section 21003, shall not be counted towards a city's population, except for an incarcerated person whose last known place of residence may be assigned to a census block in the city, if information about the last known place of residence for incarcerated persons is included in the computerized database for redistricting that is developed in accordance with subdivision (b) of Section 8253 of the Government Code, and that database is made publicly available.

(b) The council shall adopt council district boundaries that comply with the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 10301 et seq.).

(c) The council shall adopt district boundaries using the following criteria as set forth in the following order of priority:

(1) To the extent practicable, council districts shall be geographically contiguous. Areas that meet only at the points of adjoining corners are not contiguous. Areas that are separated by water and not connected by a bridge, tunnel, or regular ferry service are not contiguous.

(2) To the extent practicable, the geographic integrity of any local neighborhood or local community of interest shall be respected in a manner that minimizes its division. A "community of interest" is a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. Communities of interest do not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.

(3) Council district boundaries should be easily identifiable and understandable by residents. To the extent practicable, council districts shall be bounded by natural and artificial barriers, by streets, or by the boundaries of the city.

(4) To the extent practicable, and where it does not conflict with the preceding criteria in this subdivision, council districts shall be drawn to encourage geographical compactness in a manner that nearby areas of population are not bypassed in favor of more distant populations.

(d) The council shall not adopt council district boundaries for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against a political party.

(e) Subdivision (c) does not apply to a charter city that has adopted comprehensive or exclusive redistricting criteria in its city charter. For purposes of this subdivision, "comprehensive or exclusive" means either that the city's charter excludes consideration of redistricting criteria other than those that are identified in the city charter or that the city's charter provides two or more traditional criteria for redistricting other than the requirement that districts be equal in population.

(f) For purposes of this article, "adopt" or "adoption" in regard to council district boundaries means the passage of an ordinance or resolution specifying those boundaries.

*(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 320, Sec. 4. (SB 594) Effective September 27, 2021.)*

## **21622.**

(a) (1) For redistricting occurring in 2031 and thereafter, the boundaries of the council districts shall be adopted by the council not later than 205 days before the city's next regular election occurring after January 1 in each year ending in the number two.

(2) For redistricting occurring before 2031 and where a city has a regular election occurring after January 1, 2022 and before July 1, 2022, the boundaries of the council districts shall be adopted by the council not later than 174 days before that election. For cities that charge candidates a filing fee, notwithstanding subdivision (b) of Section 8106, the forms required under that subdivision shall not be made available until at least 28 days after the adoption of a final map. The elections official shall reduce the required number of signatures for the in-lieu-filing-fee petition, as specified in subdivision (a) of Section 8106, by the same proportion as the reduction in time for the candidate to collect signatures.

(3) For redistricting occurring before 2031 and where a city does not have a regular election occurring after January 1, 2022 and before July 1, 2022, the boundaries of the council districts shall be adopted by the council not later than 205 days before the city's next regular election occurring on or after July 1, 2022.

(b) This section does not apply to a charter city that has adopted a different redistricting deadline by ordinance or in its city charter.

(c) This section does not apply when a city transitions from at-large to district-based elections.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 19. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

### **21623.**

(a) If the boundaries of a city expand by the addition of new territory, including through annexation of unincorporated territory or consolidation with another city, the council shall add that new territory to the nearest existing council district without changing the boundaries of other council district boundaries.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), the council may adopt new boundaries for each council district under the circumstances described in subdivision (a) if both of the following conditions are met:

(1) There are more than four years until the council is next required to redistrict pursuant to Section 21621.

(2) The population of the new territory being annexed or consolidated is greater than 25 percent of the city's population as determined by the most recent federal decennial census.

(c) This section does not apply to a charter city that has adopted, by ordinance or in its city charter, a different standard for adding new territory to existing council districts.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 20. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

### **21625.**

(a) After redistricting or districting pursuant to Section 21621 or 21623, a council shall not adopt new council district boundaries until after the next federal decennial census, except under the following circumstances:

(1) A court orders the council to redistrict.

(2) The council is settling a legal claim that its council district boundaries violate the United States Constitution, the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 10301 et seq.), or this article.

(3) The boundaries of the city change by the addition of territory pursuant to Section 21623 or by the subtraction of territory.

(b) This section does not prohibit a council from adopting council districts between federal decennial censuses if the council is adopting council districts for the first time, including when a city adopts council districts for the purpose of transitioning

from electing its council members in at-large elections to elections by districts or from districts.

(c) This section does not apply to a charter city that has adopted different rules for mid-cycle redistricting in its city charter.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 21. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

## **21626.**

(a) The term of office of any council member who has been elected and whose term of office has not expired shall not be affected by any change in the boundaries of the district from which the council member was elected.

(b) At the first election for council members in each city following adoption of the boundaries of council districts, excluding a special election to fill a vacancy or a recall election, a council member shall be elected for each district under the new district plan that has the same district number as a district whose incumbent's term is due to expire. This subdivision does not apply when a city transitions from at-large to district-based elections.

(c) For a city employing both a primary and a general election, a change in the boundaries of a council district shall not be made between the direct primary election and the general election.

(d) Except as provided in subdivision (a), a person is not eligible to hold office as a member of a city council unless that person meets the requirements of Section 201 of the Elections Code and Section 34882 of the Government Code.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 22. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

## **21627.**

Before adopting the boundaries of a council district pursuant to Section 21621 or 21623, or for any other reason, the council shall hold public hearings on the proposal in accordance with Section 21627.1. This section does not apply when a city transitions from at-large to district-based elections.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 23. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

### **21627.1.**

(a) Before adopting a final map, the council shall hold at least four public hearings at which the public is invited to provide input regarding the composition of one or more council districts.

(1) At least one public hearing shall be held before the council draws a draft map or maps of the proposed council boundaries.

(2) At least two public hearings shall be held after the council has drawn a draft map or maps of the proposed council boundaries.

(b) At least one public hearing or public workshop shall be held on a Saturday, on a Sunday, or after 6 p.m. on a weekday Monday through Friday.

(c) Public hearing buildings shall be accessible to persons with disabilities.

(d) If a public hearing is consolidated with a regular or special meeting of the council that includes other substantive agenda items, the public hearing shall begin at a fixed time regardless of its order on the agenda, except that the council may first conclude any item being discussed or acted upon, including any associated public comment, when that time occurs. The time of the public hearing shall be noticed to the public.

(e) The council may have city staff or a consultant conduct one or more public workshops in lieu of holding one of the public hearings required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a).

(f) The council may establish an advisory redistricting commission to hold the public hearings required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a).

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 24. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

## **21628.**

(a) The council shall take steps to encourage residents, including those in underrepresented communities and non-English speaking communities, to participate in the redistricting public review process. These steps shall include a good faith effort to do all of the following:

(1) Providing information to media organizations that provide city news coverage, including media organizations that serve language minority communities.

(2) Providing information through good government, civil rights, civic engagement, and community groups or organizations that are active in the city, including those active in language minority communities, and those that have requested to be notified concerning city redistricting.

(b) The council shall arrange for the live translation in an applicable language of a public hearing or workshop held pursuant to this article if a request for translation is made at least 72 hours before the hearing or workshop, unless less than five days' notice are provided for the hearing or workshop, in which case the request shall be made at least 48 hours before the hearing or workshop.

(c) Notwithstanding Section 54954.2 of the Government Code, the council shall publish the date, time, and location for any public hearing or workshop on the internet at least five days before the hearing or workshop. However, if there are fewer than 28 days until the deadline to adopt boundaries, the council may publish the agenda on the internet for at least three days before the hearing or workshop.

(d) (1) A draft map shall be published on the internet for at least seven days before being adopted as a final map by the council provided that, if there are fewer than 28 days until the deadline to adopt boundaries, the draft map may instead be published on the internet for at least three days.

(2) Each draft map prepared by a member of the council or by employees or contractors of the city shall be accompanied by information on the total population, citizen voting age population, and racial and ethnic characteristics of the citizen

voting age population of each proposed council district, to the extent the city has that data.

(3) (A) The council and employees or contractors of the city shall not release draft maps of council districts earlier than three weeks after the block-level redistricting database required by subdivision (b) of Section 8253 of the Government Code is first made publicly available. This subparagraph does not prohibit the council from holding public hearings or workshops on the placement of council district boundaries before the earliest date that draft maps of council districts may be released.

(B) If the period of time between the date that the redistricting database is made publicly available and the map adoption deadline is fewer than 90 days and more than 59 days, then the waiting period required by subparagraph (A) is reduced to one week. If the period of time between the date that the redistricting database is made publicly available and the map adoption deadline is fewer than 60 days, then the waiting period required by subparagraph (A) is waived.

(e) The council shall allow the public to submit testimony or draft maps in writing and electronically.

(f) The city shall either record or prepare a written summary of each public comment and council deliberation made at every public hearing or workshop held pursuant to this article. The city shall make the recording or written summary available to the public within two weeks after the public hearing or workshop.

(g) The council shall establish, and maintain for at least 10 years after the adoption of new council district boundaries, an internet web page dedicated to redistricting. The web page may be hosted on the city's existing internet website or another internet website maintained by the city. The web page shall include, or link to, all of the following information:

(1) A general explanation of the redistricting process for the city in English and applicable languages.

(2) The procedures for a member of the public to testify during a public hearing or to submit written testimony directly to the council in English and any applicable language.

(3) A calendar of all public hearing and workshop dates. A calendar listing that includes the time and location of the public hearing or workshop satisfies the notice required by subdivision (c).

(4) The notice and agenda for each public hearing and workshop.

(5) The recording or written summary of each public hearing and workshop.

(6) Each draft map considered by the council at a public hearing.

(7) The adopted final map of council district boundaries.

(h) For purposes of this section, "applicable language" means any language that is spoken by a group of city residents with limited English proficiency who constitute 3 percent or more of the city's total population over four years of age for whom language can be determined. Before January 1, 2021, and before January 1 in every year ending in the number one thereafter, the Secretary of State shall post the applicable languages for each city in a conspicuous location on the Secretary of State's internet website. To determine the applicable languages for each city, in

2020 and in each year ending in the number zero thereafter, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Statewide Database, shall request a special tabulation from the United States Bureau of the Census of the most recent data on limited English proficiency from the bureau's American Community Survey that satisfies this subdivision. If the bureau is unable to produce that data, the Secretary of State shall base the Secretary of State's determination on the table from the American Community Survey enumerating the number of residents with limited English proficiency that has the largest number of languages included, that is publicly available, and that was produced within the previous ten years.

(i) This section does not apply when a city transitions from at-large to district-based elections.

(j) Before January 1, 2021, and before January in each year ending in the number one thereafter, the Secretary of State shall publish on the internet a template explaining the city redistricting process that meets the requirements of paragraphs (1) and (2), inclusive, of subdivision (g). The Secretary of State shall publish the template in all of the languages into which ballots are required to be translated in the state pursuant to subdivision (h). The template shall be published in the same conspicuous location on the Secretary of State's internet website that is described in subdivision (h).

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 25. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

## **21629.**

(a) If the council does not adopt council district boundaries by the deadlines set forth in Section 21622, the council shall immediately petition the superior court in the county in which the city is located for an order adopting council district boundaries. If the council does not petition the superior court within five days after the deadline, any resident of the city may file that petition and shall be entitled to recover the resident's reasonable attorney's fees and costs from the city for doing so.

(b) (1) Upon finding that a petition filed pursuant to subdivision (a) is valid, the superior court shall adopt council district boundaries in accordance with the criteria set forth in Section 21621, which shall be used in the city's next regular election. The superior court may also order the adjustment of electoral deadlines as necessary to implement the new council district boundaries in the next regular election.

(2) The superior court may appoint a special master to assist the court with adopting the council district boundaries. The city shall pay the cost for the special master and associated costs.

(3) The superior court or the special master shall hold one or more public hearings before the superior court adopts the council district boundaries.

(4) Subject to the approval of the superior court, the special master may employ redistricting experts or other consultants or counsel, independent experts in the field of redistricting and computer technology, and other necessary personnel to assist them in their work. In addition, the special master may seek the full

cooperation of the city in producing and using whatever data, computer models and programs, and technical assistance that was made available to the council and city personnel who are knowledgeable in the mechanics of drafting redistricting legislation. The superior court may assist the special master in securing the necessary personnel and the physical facilities required for their work, and to prepare for the prompt submission to the city of a request for city funding for the necessary expenses of the special master and the special master's staff.

(5) The council district boundaries adopted by the superior court shall be immediately effective in the same manner as if the court's order were an enacted resolution or ordinance of the city council.

(c) This section does not apply to a charter city that has adopted in its city charter a different method for adopting city council district boundaries when a redistricting deadline is missed.

*(Amended by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 26. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*

### **21630.**

If a council assigns the responsibility to recommend or to adopt new district boundaries to a hybrid or independent redistricting commission as defined in Section 23000, the charter city remains subject to the redistricting deadlines, requirements, and restrictions that apply to the council under this article, unless otherwise exempted by law. A redistricting commission described in this section may perform the duties required of a city council under this article.

*(Added by Stats. 2020, Ch. 90, Sec. 27. (AB 1276) Effective January 1, 2021.)*