

# Proposed Response to Grand Jury Report:

## “San Diego Unified School District School Board Elections – Time for a Change”

IBA Report 17-27

Rules Committee

July 27, 2017

Item 6



Independent Budget Analyst



## This report discusses specific elements of the School Board elections, including term limits, runoff elections, and district-wide vs. sub-district contests.

- The Grand Jury filed this report on May 9, 2017.
- The report includes 6 findings & 3 recommendations directed to the City Council.
- An extension of the original due date (Aug 7, 2017) was requested/granted.
  - The response is now due to the Superior Court Presiding Judge by Nov 3, 2017.

## Prescribed Grand Jury Responses

- For each Finding:
  - Agree
  - Disagree wholly or partially
- For each Recommendation:
  - Has been implemented
  - Has not yet been implemented, but will be
  - Requires further analysis
  - Will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable

## Finding 01

*The San Diego Unified School District election process does not always result in board members who reflect the diversity of the district's population.*

Proposed Response: **Agree**

## Finding 02

*Because of the high cost of competing in two election campaigns, support and financial backing is often required from special-interest groups.*

Proposed Response: ***Partially disagree***

- Although costs spent on election campaigns can be high, financial backing from special-interest groups or others is not required.
- Groups that wish to support candidates can do so in compliance with elections laws.

## Findings 03 & 05

*Finding 03: Term limits enable more citizens to take part in school governance.*

*Finding 05: Term limits broaden the pool of people involved in the schools boards.*

Proposed Response: ***Partially disagree***

- Because name recognition can be helpful to incumbent candidates, term limits could allow more people to become board members.
- However, there are other ways to be involved in school governance besides being a board member.

## Finding 04

*By instituting sub-district elections and term limits, a large part of the elections process will be returned to the people.*

### Proposed Response: **Disagree**

- The current procedures for selecting board members, as part of an elections process, is fundamentally instituted in the people.
- Implementing the Grand Jury's recommended changes to the elections process may not mean that the citizenry as a whole would have an enhanced role.
- However, limiting district electors to voting only in their sub-district races would strengthen the voting influence of those sub-districts.

## Finding 06

*School board positions were not intended to be a long-term career position.*

Proposed Response: ***Partially disagree***

- School board positions are intended to be a means for providing leadership through a democratic process, including citizen input and varied viewpoints, and are not commonly viewed as long-term career positions.
- However, Charter section 66 (and its seven amendments since 1931) has never included term limits for San Diego Unified School District board members.

## Recommendations 17-28 & 17-30

*Consider placing a measure on a future ballot to allow the voters to decide whether to amend the San Diego City Charter...*

*17-28: to change the election process for the San Diego Unified School District School Board Elections, allowing only citizens in their sub-districts to elect representation directly from their sub-district.*

*17-30: to limit the number of terms San Diego Unified School District School Board Trustees can serve.*

Proposed Response: ***The recommendation has been implemented.***

## Recommendations 17-28 & 17-30 *(con't)*

- The Council recently considered a similar proposal in March 2017 and decided not to take any action to implement the item.
- This issue could be considered as part of the normal ballot measure process at a later date.

## Recommendation 17-29

*Consider placing a measure on a future ballot to allow the voters to decide whether to amend the San Diego City Charter to allow a San Diego Unified School District board candidate who receives a majority of the votes in their sub-district during the primary election be considered elected.*

Proposed Response: ***The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.***

## Recommendation 17-29 *(con't)*

- In the November 2016 general election, voters approved the opposite approach for the City of San Diego races for Mayor, Councilmembers, and City Attorney.
- With the approval of Measure K, a runoff for each race will now be required for the two candidates receiving the most votes in the primary.
- Previously, runoff elections were not required if a candidate in a given race received a majority vote in the primary.



## Next Steps

We request the Rules Committee provide feedback and forward its approved proposed response to the full Council.