

Proposed Response to Grand Jury Report:

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

IBA Report 17-27

City Council

October 16, 2017

Item 201



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.

Requested Council Actions

- Approve and adopt the proposed response.
- Authorize the Council President to execute and deliver the response to the Superior Court by Nov 3, 2017.