

## **Mayor's Comments at the September 10, 2013 Council Meeting Regarding November Even Year Election Challenges**

Some members of the community and the proponents of Voting Rights Act litigation against the City have asked that the City's regular election date be changed to November of even numbered years. While it may sound like a simple request, there are numerous challenges to that timing I want to share with the public.

One of the speakers' stated purposes for changing the election timing is increased public participation. I believe that anticipated outcome is based on a presumption that the City's candidates would be included on the ballot issued by Los Angeles County. That would not be the case. The City has asked the County if we could consolidate our elections with the County elections held in November of even numbered years. We have officially been advised by the Registrar of Voters that, due to voting system limitations, the County cannot approve a request to consolidate a City Council election in November 2014. The County has full legal authority in state law to refuse a consolidation request on this ground. Further, the County will not commit to approving a request for election consolidation in November 2016. Those of you who go to the polls to vote may know that the County's voting system is about 40 years old and can only accommodate a limited number of voting choices. There is simply a physical limitation to the County's voting system. The County is in the process of having a new voting system designed but an implementation date is years from now and undetermined.

Under these circumstances, if the City's election date were changed to November of even numbered years, there could be significant voter confusion and the danger of disenfranchising voters. Because the County would not conduct the City's election, the City would be forced to run its own separate election on the same day the County holds its election. This is known as a concurrent election. At a minimum, people voting at the polls would be required to check-in twice, sign two rosters, and vote on two different voting systems. The worst case for people voting at the polls would be the necessity to drive to two different locations to vote if the County's polling locations did not have sufficient space for the City to conduct its election at the same location.

Residents voting-by-mail would need to take care to return the correct ballot to the different agencies conducting elections. While City and County election staff would do what they could, within the bounds of the law, to exchange misdirected ballots, it's possible some voters' ballots may be determined to be invalid. Additionally, because the City must certify its election results within one week of election day and the County has about four weeks to review and count ballots, City ballots which voters return to the County by mistake may still be in sealed envelopes at the point in time that the City certifies the results of its election. That would mean some voters' ballots would never be counted.

The community would pay the additional cost for the extra precincts the City would likely operate to avoid the need for voters to go to two locations. In November 2012, the County operated 49 voting locations in the City. The City usually has 23 polling places. Doubling the City's precincts will result in increased costs for recruiting and training additional precinct officers and supplying the extra polling places.

The County would approve a request from the City to consolidate its elections with school district elections in November of odd numbered years. However, based on previous election results, that date change would not achieve the goal of additional participation and, in years like this when some school district elections are being cancelled, the City would be required to pay additional costs without corresponding benefit to its voters.

This explanation may have been too detailed for some, but I believed it was important to take a few minutes to explain the limitations to the City's election choices.