

CITY ATTORNEY'S IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS OF MEASURE W

This measure seeks voter approval of Ordinance 3011, which would amend the City Charter concerning the method and manner of election of members to the Whittier City Council.

The City Charter, adopted by Whittier voters in 1957, currently calls for elections of five City Council members by all City voters (at large) to terms of four years each, staggered so that three are elected in one election year and two are elected in the next. The Mayor is currently selected by the five Council members each year on a rotating basis. The Mayor is the presiding officer of the City Council, executes ordinances, resolutions and agreements on behalf of the City, has primary responsibility for interpreting city policy and programs to the people, and has other duties provided in state and city laws. The Mayor has the same voting power as the other City Council members.

The proposed measure, placed on the ballot by the City Council, would change this system to "district-based elections," a method of electing members to the City Council by districts. A candidate must reside within an election district and is elected only by voters residing within that district.

Under the proposed ordinance, the City would be divided into four geographic districts equal in population according to the latest federal decennial census. Factors which may be considered in creating the districts are: (1) topography, (2) geography, (3) cohesiveness, contiguity, integrity, and compactness of territory, and (4) community of interest of the districts. Cal. Elec. Code § 21620. Four Council Members would be chosen by this district method for four-year terms. The Mayor would be directly elected by all City voters, for a two-year term. This new manner of electing the Mayor would not change the powers of the Mayor, which remain the same as currently provided in the City's charter and ordinances.

Elections would continue to be staggered so that every two years, two Council Member seats and the Mayor's seat will be up for election. The measure does not specify the exact manner of drawing districts, which would be done in accordance with state law. After the initial establishment of the districts, the district boundaries would be modified, if necessary, every ten years so that each district continues to be as nearly equal in population as may be according to the latest federal decennial census.

A "yes" vote on this measure would approve Ordinance No. 3011, which changes the current city-wide at-large election system to a district election system, allowing the creation of four districts, from which one council member would be elected by voters of each district, and the Mayor would be directly elected by all voters city-wide to serve for a two-year term.

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CITY ATTORNEY'S IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS OF MEASURE W (Continued)

A "no" vote on this measure would leave in place the current charter provision which provides for five Council Members, elected by all voters city-wide, for staggered terms of four years each, with the Mayor selected by the council rather than elected, currently on an annual basis under Council policy.

Dated: March 11, 2014

RICHARD D. JONES
City Attorney

The above statement is an impartial analysis of Measure W. If you desire a copy of the measure or of Ordinance 3011, please call the City Clerk's Office at (562) 567-9854, and a copy will be mailed at no cost to you.