



**Los Angeles County Committee on
School District Organization**
c/o Los Angeles County Office of Education
9300 Imperial Highway, Downey, CA 90242-2890

2025 Members

First Supervisorial District: John Nunez, John Quintanilla
Second Supervisorial District: Estefany Castaneda, Charles Davis
Third Supervisorial District: Ralph Mechur, Barry A. Snell
Fourth Supervisorial District: Donald LaPlante
Martha Deutsch – Vice Chairperson
Fifth Supervisorial District: Cherise Moore
Suzan T. Solomon - Chairperson
At Large: Frank Bostrom

May 23, 2025

TO: Members of the Los Angeles County Committee
on School District Organization (County Committee)

FROM: April Mitchell, Acting Secretary
County Committee

SUBJECT: Rescheduled Meeting of the County Committee – Thursday, May 29, 2025

The next regular meeting of the County Committee is scheduled for Thursday, May 29, 2025, at 9:30 A.M. in the board room at the Los Angeles County Office of Education in Downey. **This meeting will be hybrid, with in-person, as well as the online opportunity to participate.** Connection information will be emailed to you in advance of the meeting.

Attached is the agenda for the meeting of May 29, 2025.

If you have questions, please call Dr. Allison Deegan at (562) 922-6336.

AD/EH:vb
Attachments



**Los Angeles County Committee on
School District Organization**
c/o Los Angeles County Office of Education
9300 Imperial Highway, Downey, CA 90242-2890

Agenda No. 3 – Calendar Year 2025

The agenda is accessible through the LACOE website at the following link:

<https://www.lacoe.edu/CountyCommittee/Agendas>

Procedures for addressing the County Committee can be found on its website. To request a disability-related accommodation under the ADA, please call Ms. Victoria Bernstein at (562) 922-6131 at least 24 hours in advance.

For members of the public, use the following phone number to call into the meeting: 1-669-900-9128

Webinar ID: 861 9810 0117

Passcode: 028856

The public may also view the meeting via the following link:

<https://lacoe-edu.zoom.us/j/86198100117?pwd=azZlcHY4b1dqCVBqOVVhem8wVi9CUT09>

Password: 028856

PUBLIC COMMENT IN ADVANCE: To provide public comment in advance, you may also submit written comments or documentation by e-mail to: Bernstein_Victoria@lacoe.edu or you may record a voicemail with your comments by calling: (562) 922-6131.

- Any advance public comment or documentation must be submitted no later than 4:00 P.M. the Wednesday before the scheduled meeting (one week before the meeting date).
- Please include your name, phone number, specific agenda item, and meeting date in your correspondence.
- Correspondence received shall become part of the administrative record.

**County Committee on School District Organization
Regular Meeting – Hybrid (In-person, as well as remote online access)
9300 Imperial Highway, Board Room
Downey, CA 90242
May 29, 2025
9:30 A.M.**

*I Information
D Discussion
A Action*

Speaker	Item	Notes
Ms. Solomon	I. CALL TO ORDER - 9:30 A.M.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	III. ROLL CALL	<i>I, D, A</i>

Speaker	Item	Notes
Ms. Solomon	IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	V. ORDERING OF THE AGENDA	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	VI. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - Attachment April 2, 2025	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo	VII. COUNTY COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS The Chair may address Communications.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON OPEN SESSION ITEMS Access for members of the public to observe and offer public comment: Connection information was provided to the Public for those who wish to remotely attend the County Committee meeting as a listener or to make public comment. Public comment received by 4:00 P.M. the Wednesday before the meeting (one week before the meeting date) becomes part of the administrative record.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo	IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo	X. CORRESPONDENCE	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	XI. PUBLIC INTEREST ITEMS / COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	XII. CONSENT CALENDAR	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	XIII. PRESENTATIONS	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	XIV. REPORTS / STUDY TOPICS	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. LaPlante Dr. Deegan Mr. Hass	An update will be provided about the Policies Subcommittee	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	XV. RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	XVI. HEARINGS	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	XVII. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS	<i>I, D, A</i>

Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo Dr. Deegan Mr. Hass	A. CALIFORNIA VOTING RIGHTS ACT (CVRA) An update will be provided to the County Committee on local, state, and national activity related to CVRA.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo Dr. Deegan Mr. Hass	B. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - Attachment An update will be provided to the County Committee on legislation that may impact the school district organization process.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo Dr. Deegan	C. UPDATE ON LOS ANGELES USD (LAUSD) REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS - Attachment An update may be provided to the County Committee on recent activity related to school district organization proposals pertaining to LAUSD.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo Dr. Deegan	D. UPDATE ON LOS ANGELES USD (LAUSD) REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS EXCLUDING THOSE AFFECTING THE LAUSD - Attachment An update may be provided to the County Committee on recent activity related to school district organization proposals pertaining to LAUSD.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo Dr. Deegan	E. COUNTY COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS, MEETING SCHEDULE, ESTABLISHMENT OF MEETING TIMES, FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS, FOLLOW UP The Chair may provide reminders about any upcoming public hearings, meetings, and any other matters.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon Mr. Castelo Dr. Deegan	F. A PETITION TO IMPLEMENT TRUSTEE AREAS AND TRUSTEE AREA VOTING IN THE ACTON-AGUA DULCE USD Secretary Castelo will introduce a petition from the Acton-Agua Dulce USD to implement trustee areas and trustee area voting.	<i>I, D, A</i>
Ms. Solomon	G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - FINAL VOTE ON PETITION TO FORM A MALIBU USD FROM TERRITORY WITHIN THE SANTA MONICA MALIBU USD (SMMUSD) At the April 2, 2025 meeting, the County Committee considered the entire administrative record, including the	<i>I, D, A</i>

	interested parties’ reports and studies, correspondence, public comments, and all materials submitted concerning the City of Malibu’s Petition for Unification, received final presentations from all interested parties and members of the public. The Committee deliberated on the petition, but did not take a final vote before the meeting adjourned. The Education Code requires the County Committee to submit an advisory recommendation when it sends the petition for unification to the State Board of Education (final review of petitions for unification are a matter for the State Board of Education). This matter from the April 2, 2025 meeting therefore remains unfinished. The Committee must take a final vote on its recommendation on the petition for unification to fulfill its statutory obligation.	
Ms. Solomon	XVIII. ADJOURNMENT	<i>I, D, A</i>

**UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE
LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION
Hybrid Meeting
April 2, 2025**

County Committee Meeting April 2, 2025 The Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization (County Committee) held a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, April 2, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 9:34 AM by Ms. Suzan Solomon.

Members Present

Frank Bostrom
Estefany Castañeda (9:43 AM)
Charles Davis
Martha Deutsch
Donald LaPlante
Ralph Mechur
Dr. Cherise Moore
John Nuñez
John Quintanilla
Barry Snell
Suzan Solomon

Staff Present

April Mitchell, Acting Secretary
Dr. Allison Deegan, Staff
Eric Hass, Staff
Elizabeth Talbot, Staff
Victoria Bernstein, Staff

Item	Description																								
Call to Order	Ms. Solomon called the County Committee meeting to order at 9:34 AM.																								
Pledge of Allegiance	Mr. Nuñez led the flag salute.																								
Roll Call	Roll call was conducted. Attendance is as follows: <table><tr><td>Mr. Frank Bostrom</td><td>Yes</td><td>Dr. Cherise Moore</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Ms. Estefany Castaneda</td><td>Late</td><td>Mr. John Nunez</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Charles Davis</td><td>Yes</td><td>Mr. John Quintanilla</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Ms. Martha Deutsch</td><td>Yes</td><td>Mr. Barry Snell</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Donald LaPlante</td><td>Yes</td><td>Ms. Suzan Solomon</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Ralph Mechur</td><td>Yes</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Mr. Frank Bostrom	Yes	Dr. Cherise Moore	Yes	Ms. Estefany Castaneda	Late	Mr. John Nunez	Yes	Mr. Charles Davis	Yes	Mr. John Quintanilla	Yes	Ms. Martha Deutsch	Yes	Mr. Barry Snell	Yes	Mr. Donald LaPlante	Yes	Ms. Suzan Solomon	Yes	Mr. Ralph Mechur	Yes		
Mr. Frank Bostrom	Yes	Dr. Cherise Moore	Yes																						
Ms. Estefany Castaneda	Late	Mr. John Nunez	Yes																						
Mr. Charles Davis	Yes	Mr. John Quintanilla	Yes																						
Ms. Martha Deutsch	Yes	Mr. Barry Snell	Yes																						
Mr. Donald LaPlante	Yes	Ms. Suzan Solomon	Yes																						
Mr. Ralph Mechur	Yes																								
Establishment of Quorum	Quorum was established.																								
Ordering of the Agenda	The ordering of the agenda stands. No recommendations to reorder the agenda were received.																								
Approval of Minutes of February 5, 2025	It was MOVED by Mr. Bostrom and SECONDED by Mr. Mechur. Votes are as follows: <table><tr><td>Mr. Frank Bostrom</td><td>Yes</td><td>Dr. Cherise Moore</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Ms. Estefany Castaneda</td><td>Late</td><td>Mr. John Nunez</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Charles Davis</td><td>Yes</td><td>Mr. John Quintanilla</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Ms. Martha Deutsch</td><td>Yes</td><td>Mr. Barry Snell</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Donald LaPlante</td><td>Yes</td><td>Ms. Suzan Solomon</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Ralph Mechur</td><td>Yes</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Mr. Frank Bostrom	Yes	Dr. Cherise Moore	Yes	Ms. Estefany Castaneda	Late	Mr. John Nunez	Yes	Mr. Charles Davis	Yes	Mr. John Quintanilla	Yes	Ms. Martha Deutsch	Yes	Mr. Barry Snell	Yes	Mr. Donald LaPlante	Yes	Ms. Suzan Solomon	Yes	Mr. Ralph Mechur	Yes		
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Mr. Charles Davis	Yes	Mr. John Quintanilla	Yes																						
Ms. Martha Deutsch	Yes	Mr. Barry Snell	Yes																						
Mr. Donald LaPlante	Yes	Ms. Suzan Solomon	Yes																						
Mr. Ralph Mechur	Yes																								

<i>County Committee Communications</i>	Ms. Mitchell shared that LACOE continues to support school districts affected by the January fires in Los Angeles County. The Division of Business Advisory Services is helping track attendance for thousands of displaced students, many of whom have enrolled in new schools across different districts and cities. Despite the unprecedented challenges, efforts are underway to ensure districts receive their entitled funding and any additional assistance available.
<i>Public Comments on Open Session Items</i>	Dr. Deegan noted that numerous public comments were received regarding the Malibu USD petition. An initial packet was sent to the Committee. Additional comments received after the posting of the agenda through yesterday were provided in members' folders. Any further submissions will also be shared. Ms. Solomon reminded that members of the public wishing to comment on agenda items will be called to speak when those items are addressed. Those who do not identify themselves by name will not be given the opportunity to speak. Additionally, no one may hold more than one spot in the line. Those wishing to address the Committee with general comments will have a two-minute limit per speaker. No public speakers for open session items.
<i>Announcements</i>	Ms. Mitchell took the opportunity to thank the Committee members who attended the public hearing at Santa Monica College two weeks ago, expressing her appreciation for their participation alongside her and the LACOE team.
<i>Correspondence</i>	Mr. Hass confirmed that late comments were received last night. Copies of letters from the representatives of Santa Monica and Malibu have been placed in members' folders. Additionally, comments received are being posted to the website.
<i>Public Interest Items/ Committee Member Announcements</i>	None at this time.
<i>Consent Calendar</i>	None at this time.
<i>Presentations</i>	None at this time.
<i>Reports/Study Topics</i>	Mr. Hass noted all members received the bylaws and some expressed interest in providing feedback. The Policies Subcommittee will review these comments at their next meeting before proceeding with the work on the policies, starting with finalizing the bylaws.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None at this time.
<i>Hearings</i>	None at this time.

<i>Informational Items</i> <i>A. Review of a Petition to Form a Malibu Unified School District from Territory within the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District</i>	A. Presentation was delivered on behalf of the City of Malibu, with Ms. Christine Wood (via Zoom) leading the primary remarks, supported by comments from Stephanie Véniez and Kathy Domenico. A brief disruption occurred due to a technical issue with Zoom, but the presentation resumed without issue. Representatives from the Santa Monica-Malibu USD delivered their presentation. Speakers included Shin Green from Eastshore Consulting, Jon Kean, Dr. Stacy Williamson, and Laurie Lieberman. The presentation concluded with final remarks by David Soldani. Public comments were then heard, and after the public comment period, the Committee took a short recess for everyone's comfort. Upon return, Brianna Garcia, Vice President of School Services of California (SSC), gave a presentation in person and committee members asked questions, followed by a staff report presented by Dr. Deegan. The Committee proceeded with discussing each of the nine statutorily required conditions individually. Mr. Davis moved to recommend approval of the petition, and the motion was seconded by Mr. LaPlante. Mr. Mechur then offered a substitute motion to recommend denial of the petition, seconded by Dr. Moore. Ms. Solomon, after seeking procedural clarification from Mr. LaPlante, called for a vote on the substitute motion. The substitute motion to deny the petition passed by a vote of six to five, but before and after that vote, there was confusion over whether that vote represented the Committee's final recommendation or whether it reflected the Committee's consideration and approval of allowing Mr. Mechur's substitute motion to replace Mr. Davis's original motion. The lack of clarity was compounded by members on the dais speaking simultaneously and the competing form of the motions made by Mechur. Davis and Mechur further complicated matters. Discussion continued regarding procedural matters, but no further action was taken on the matter. The meeting was then adjourned. Mr. Davis exited the meeting prior to its formal adjournment.
<i>Informational Items</i> <i>B. California Voting Rights Act (CVRA)</i>	B. Mr. Hass provided a CVRA update, sharing four key points. Redondo Beach has become the first city in Los Angeles County to implement ranked-choice voting. Additionally, at least four other states across the country are considering the CVRA as a model. In Central California, cities such as Gilroy have received demand letters, with Gilroy responding promptly. Lastly, the Acton-Agua Dulce USD is nearing the end of its CVRA petition process and is likely to have its petition ready to be introduced to the County Committee at one of the upcoming meetings.

<i>Informational Items</i> <i>C. Legislative Update</i>	C. Mr. Hass provided the update, noting that Senate Bill 226 addresses community college district territory transfers, a matter over which the Committee retains authority rather than the State Chancellor’s Office. Other newly introduced bills are expected to be reviewed before the committee’s next meeting.																								
<i>Informational Items</i> <i>D. Update on LAUSD Reorganization Proposals</i>	D. None at this time.																								
<i>Informational Items</i> <i>E. Update on Los Angeles County Reorganization Proposals Excluding Those Affecting LAUSD</i>	E. None at this time.																								
<i>Informational Items</i> <i>F. Follow Up</i>	F. None at this time.																								
<i>Adjournment</i>	It was MOVED by Mr. Bostrom and SECONDED by Mr. Mechur. Votes are as follows: <table><tr><td>Mr. Frank Bostrom</td><td>Yes</td><td>Dr. Cherise Moore</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Ms. Estefany Castaneda</td><td>Yes</td><td>Mr. John Nunez</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Charles Davis</td><td>Absent</td><td>Mr. John Quintanilla</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Ms. Martha Deutsch</td><td>Yes</td><td>Mr. Barry Snell</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Donald LaPlante</td><td>Yes</td><td>Ms. Suzan Solomon</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Mr. Ralph Mechur</td><td>Yes</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Mr. Frank Bostrom	Yes	Dr. Cherise Moore	Yes	Ms. Estefany Castaneda	Yes	Mr. John Nunez	Yes	Mr. Charles Davis	Absent	Mr. John Quintanilla	Yes	Ms. Martha Deutsch	Yes	Mr. Barry Snell	Yes	Mr. Donald LaPlante	Yes	Ms. Suzan Solomon	Yes	Mr. Ralph Mechur	Yes		
Mr. Frank Bostrom	Yes	Dr. Cherise Moore	Yes																						
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Ms. Martha Deutsch	Yes	Mr. Barry Snell	Yes																						
Mr. Donald LaPlante	Yes	Ms. Suzan Solomon	Yes																						
Mr. Ralph Mechur	Yes																								



Christine N. Wood
Partner
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May 7, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

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*Re: Conflicts of Interest of Barry Snell and Ralph Mechur in Relation to
City of Malibu's Petition to Form Malibu Unified School District*

Dear Ms. Cervera and Ms. Rogers:

I am writing to restate the City of Malibu's concerns with Ralph Mechur and Barry Snell participating in the County Committee on School District Organization's (County Committee) deliberations on the City of Malibu's Petition to form an independent Malibu Unified School District from territory within the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District ("District" or "SM-MUSD"). The City first expressed concerns about Mr. Snell's and Mr. Mechur's participation in the County Committee deliberations to the County Committee in correspondence dated December 9, 2021, and December 21, 2021. The City never received a response to those concerns raised in 2021. Therefore, in an attempt to get some clarity about the County's position on this matter of fairness and due process, the City is sending this correspondence to restate its concerns and to ask County Counsel to issue a statement as to the inappropriateness of their involvement in the vote related to the City's Petition.

A. Their Membership on the County Committee Violates the City's Right to a Fair Tribunal.

In general terms, Mr. Snell's and Mr. Mechur's membership of the County Committee creates disproportionate representation for SM-MUSD and denies the City a fair consideration of its Petition. "When, as here, an administrative agency conducts adjudicative proceedings, the constitutional guarantee of due process of law requires a fair tribunal. A fair tribunal is one in which the judge or other decision maker is free of bias for or against a party." (*Gerawan Farming, Inc. v. Agricultural Labor Relations Board* (2020) 52 Cal.App.5th 141, 207; see also *Morongo*

Band of Mission Indians v. State Water Resources Control Bd. (2009) 45 Cal.4th 731, 73.) The County Committee own policies state that “A member should abstain from voting on any issue before the County Committee where such a vote will result in either a real or perceived conflict of interest. A conflict of interest exists when a member, individually or as a representative of a public agency or special interest group, has a competing financial, personal, policy, or other interest on any issue. Members should avoid voting on issues where such a vote may even give the appearance of a conflict of interest.” (Policies of the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization (the “County Committee Policies”), section (I)(F)(9).)

LACOE’s County Committee is an eleven-member body that studies and makes recommendations and decisions on school district organization for the 80 school districts in Los Angeles County that serve more than 2 million students. Currently, two of the eleven County Committee members are recent SM-MUSD board members, with Mr. Snell serving from 2006 to 2010 and Mr. Mechur serving from 2007 to 2020. More directly, out of 80 school districts, SM-MUSD is the only school district with two prior board members on the County Committee. Further, both Mr. Snell and Mr. Mechur were elected to the County Committee after the City issued its petition in 2017.

While it is true that a member of the governing board of a school district or community college district in the same county may simultaneously serve as a member of the county committee (Ed Code 4007), it is also true that that same party may not serve both positions simultaneously where the two positions would cause a party to be unable to perform their duties free from bias (85 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 603 (1985)). In this instance, the fundamental principles of due process are challenged when the City’s Petition is being considered by two persons who disproportionately represent the interests of the District that is the subject of the City’s Petition. At a rudimentary level, Mr. Snell and Mr. Mechur’s membership on the County Committee and motives are questionable and create the appearance that the County Committee cannot fairly consider the City’s Petition.

B. Both Mr. Snell and Mr. Mechur Have Engaged in Behavior that Demonstrates Their Bias and Conflicts of Interest.

Shared Bias and Conflict of Interest. Furthermore, both Mr. Snell and Mr. Mechur are ex-officio members of the Community for Excellent Public Schools (“CEPS”), a community group that describes itself as being “dedicated to the preservation and betterment of public schools in the Santa Monica–Malibu Unified School District.” CEPS has opposed the City’s Petition and continued to do so after Mr. Snell and Mr. Mechur joined the County Committee. (Please see Attachment #1, the screen shots from the CEPS website.)

Mr. Snell’s Bias and Conflict of Interest. Separately, Mr. Snell served on the SM-MUSD Board from 2006 to 2010. Additionally, he has had consistent leadership in the Black Agenda and Santa Monica Black Lives Association (“SMBLA”) that contributes further to his real and/or perceived conflicts. According to the SMBLA website, members of the Santa Monica community created the Black Agenda in July 2020 to address racial inequality within Santa Monica. On

September 8, 2020, the Black Agenda presented their recommendations to the Santa Monica City Council, and the City provided funding for SMBLA, a nonprofit entity that would take the lead on the Black Agenda's initiatives. The Black Agenda formed the Steering Committee for SMBLA, and SMBLA's Steering Committee formed the SMBLA Board of Directors.

First, Mr. Snell is shown to be one of the nine members from the Black Agenda that came together to form SMBLA's Steering Committee. (Please see Attachment #2, the SMBLA Steering Committee as presented on its website in 2021.) Mr. Snell also publicly speaks on behalf of the Black Agenda and SMBLA, as revealed in the attached Santa Monica Daily Press article. (Please see Attachment #3, SMDP article.)

Second, SMBLA hosted a meeting on Saturday, March 13, 2021, and invited Dr. Ben Drati, former SM-MUSD Superintendent, to present the District's perspective on the City's Petition. (Please see Attachment #4, SMBLA meeting invite and agenda.) On that SMBLA meeting agenda, the first item was "Introductions and overview of the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization (LACCOSDO)." Please note, the City was neither invited to present its Petition during this meeting nor on any other SMBLA meeting. Furthermore, Mr. Snell was not only scheduled to attend the SMBLA meeting, but helped to facilitate Dr. Drati's attendance by forwarding him the virtual meeting information and suggesting that Dr. Drati could call him if he had any questions.

Finally, you will see that the Black Agenda has actively advocated against the City's Petition, as noted in its September 14, 2021, public comment—just four days before Mr. Snell offered the failed motion to deny the City's Petition at the County Committee's final preliminary public hearing. (Please see Attachment #5, Black Agenda's written public comments against the City's Petition.)

In summary, not only does Mr. Snell hold leadership positions in two organizations that have actively and publicly opposed the City's Petition, but he actively invited Dr. Drati to speak against the City's Petition at a meeting that was scheduled a month before the County Committee's first preliminary public hearing on April 17, 2021. Then, just days before the final preliminary public hearing, the Black Agenda—a movement that Mr. Snell represents—issues a formal comment in opposition to the City's Petition. The City hopes you will agree that these additional documents further demonstrate Mr. Snell's complete disregard for the integrity of the County Committee.

Mr. Mechur's Bias and Conflict of Interest. Separately, Mr. Mechur served on the SM-MUSD Board for more than 13 years, from 2007 to 2020, which means he was an active member of the Board while the City's Petition has been before the County Committee. Further, he had made several public comments before the County Committee against the City's petition in the 2021 preliminary public hearings. (Please see Attachment #6, Mr. Mechur's written public comments against the City's Petition.)

Michelle Cervera
Kristen Rogers
May 7, 2025
Page 4

Additionally, his partner, Linda Greenberg, is currently the executive director at Santa Monica Education Foundation, and Mr. Mechur himself is an architect who has been hired to do work for Maria Vazquez, a current SM-MUSD Board member. These affiliations demonstrate a real, if not perceived, personal and policy interest by Mr. Mechur in denying the City's Petition.

To be clear, the City is not opposed to any of the community organizations supported by Mr. Snell or Mr. Mechur. However, as described below, their involvement in the advocacy against the City's Petition makes it quite clear that they have competing personal and policy interests—both as an individual and as a member of these special interest groups. “A conflict of interest exists when a member, individually or as a representative of a public agency or special interest group, has a competing financial, personal, policy, or other interest on any issue.” Hence, there are clear bias and conflicts under nearly any measure, but definitely by the standards of the County Committee's policies, because of their history on the SM-MUSD Board of Education and their involvement with these special interest groups.

Sincerely,



Christine N. Wood
of BEST BEST & KRIEGER LLP

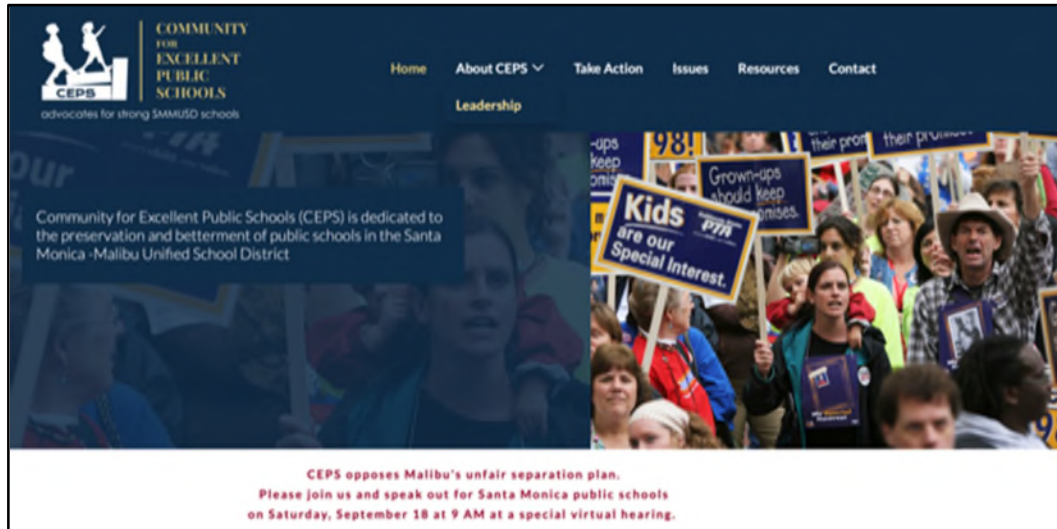
CNW

Enclosures

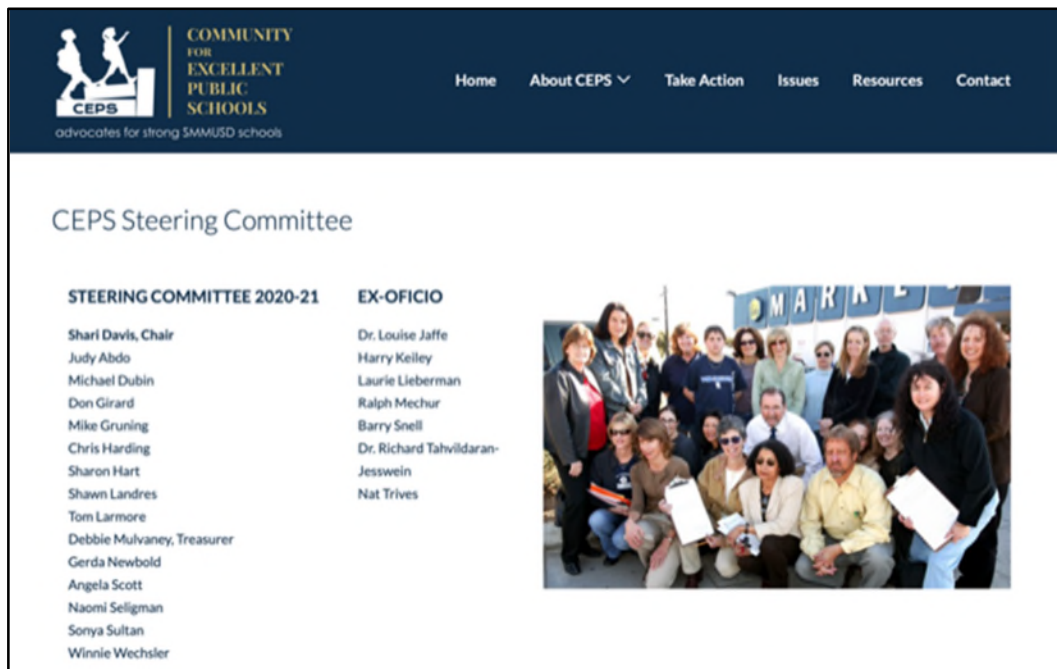
ATTACHMENT #1

BB&K
BEST BEST & KRIEGER
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

CEPS “Home” Screen Shot

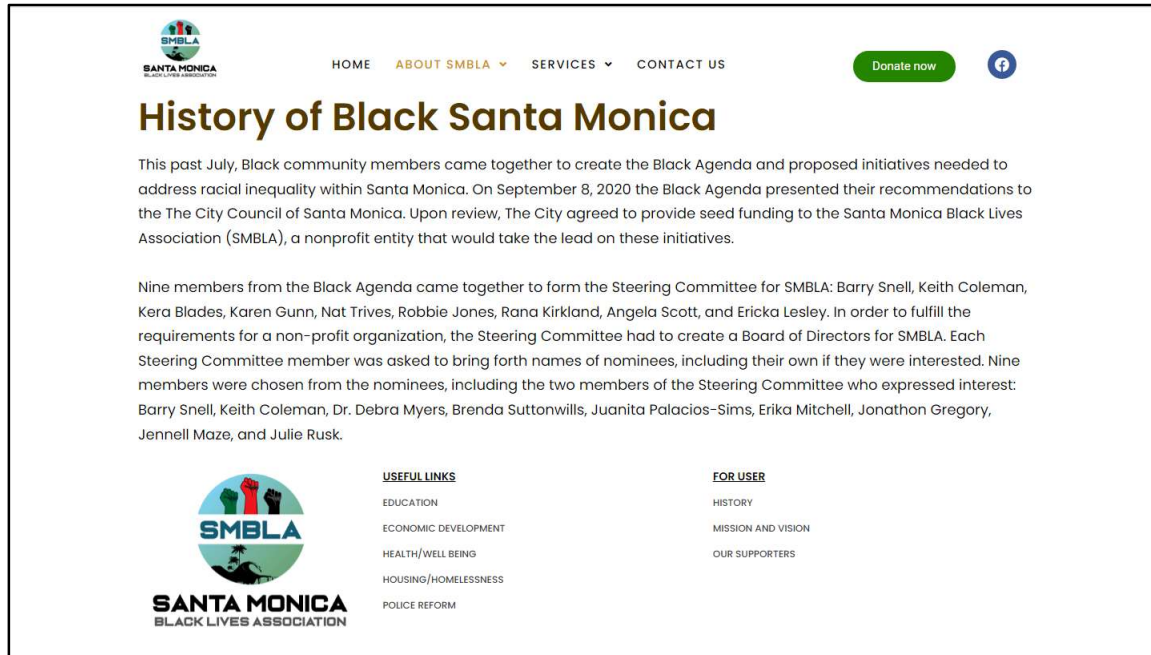


CEPS “Leadership” Screen Shot



ATTACHMENT #2

SMBLA “About SMBLA” screen shot



Source: Santa Monica Black Lives Association “About Us” Page, last visited Dec. 17, 2021, <https://smbla.org/history-of-black-santa-monica/>.

ATTACHMENT #3



We just caught your dinner.
SUPER FRESH, SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD DELIVERED WEEKLY
SAVE \$15 WITH CODE
SAMOIS*


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[Home](#) > [News](#) > [City Council](#) > September 6, 2020 Santa Monica City Council to Advance a Black Agenda

© Sep. 06, 2020 at 3:20 pm

CITY COUNCIL FEATURED

September 6, 2020 Santa Monica City Council to Advance a Black Agenda

Guest Author · 1 year ago · black agenda , city council.



Santa Monica City Hall (File photo)



Upcoming Santa Monica City Council Meeting Includes Vote on Recommendations to Advance a Black Agenda in Efforts to Promote the Wellbeing of the Black Community

Santa Monica, Calif. — September 6, 2020 —The Santa Monica City Council released the meeting agenda and staff report for the next city council meeting, Tuesday, Sept. 8. Among the 13 major agenda items is: **Agenda Item 8-A: Advancing a Black Agenda for Santa Monica**. This action item is the next step following the June, 2020 City Council vote to advance equitable and lasting change in Santa Monica. Comprised of a group of Santa Monica's Black community leaders, the **Black Agenda** is united for the purpose of assisting the City of Santa Monica in addressing systemic barriers through the implementation of an "informed, proactive platform of forthright, sustained, and credible actions. The Black Agenda is part of the City council's three-prong approach to addressing equity, and includes development of a **Black Agenda** for Santa Monica, Public Safety Reform and Equity and Inclusion Work in the City.

The **Black Agenda** is also focusing on mental and physical health/wellness in driving a blueprint for change. "The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the Black and Brown community. The centuries-long history of institutional racism, loss of black lives, and disparity in access, opportunities, and resources have led to days of reckoning. The city of Santa Monica is not immune. It has an opportunity to address its own challenges and self-correct," says Dr. Karen Gunn, a retired Santa Monica College professor, and Principal for Gunn Consulting Group.

Santa Monica native Robbie Jones, a Black Agenda steering committee member agrees with Dr. Gunn's sentiments. "For City Council to approve a Black Agenda is a step in the right direction in healing and making our community whole again," says Jones, CEO of Black Santa Monica Tours and Concierge. She adds, "Years ago, we had a vibrant, Black community, where many residents were property owners who had their own businesses. Everyone was family – no matter what your last name was," Jones fondly recalls. The longtime activist has been spearheading numerous grassroots efforts for more than 25 years.

The **Black Agenda** is pivotal to Santa Monica's growth and move toward reimagining a more inclusive and equitable city," says Barry Snell, a **Black Agenda** steering committee member and Santa Monica College Board Trustee. "The **Black Agenda** is designed to improve the wellbeing of Black Santa Monica residents whom we know have been disproportionately marginalized due to systematic racism in housing, employment and education. Through outreach and assessment, we're creating a comprehensive blueprint for authentic change across multiple areas from economics and affordable housing to civic engagement and police reform."

Snell says the **Black Agenda** is an evolving thinktank for community members to engage and cultivate change through various methodologies and projects including the arts and humanitarian efforts. On July 14, 2020, the **Black Agenda** was approved to receive 10% of non-designated donations from the City's We Are Santa Monica Fund to support projects that are part of the **Black Agenda**. Such non-specifically earmarked donations were

once limited to COVID-19 but has since expanded to support the **Black Agenda**. "Not only are we looking at innovative ways of recovering, but we're exploring opportunities for our Black community to sustain itself in an economy that's ever-changing," says Snell.

With respect to the remaining two prongs of council's mission to address equity, recommendations both from the City Council-appointed Public Safety Reform Advisory Committee and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) will also be presented during Tuesday night's council meeting. Each group will have time to present and field public comments.

To get involved in the Black Agenda, contact the Black Agenda Steering Committee, led by Dr. Karen Gunn, Robbie Jones, and Barry Snell at SantamonicaBlackAgenda@gmail.com.

To make a cash or in-kind donation to the City of Santa Monica for a particular use, please contact Debbie Lee at Debbie.lee@smgov.net.

Tags : [black agenda](#) [city council](#).

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ATTACHMENT #4

From: Barry Snell <barry@snellcpa.com>
To: Bdrati@smmusd.org <Bdrati@smmusd.org>
Sent: 3/11/2021 11:55:03 PM
Subject: FW: **IMPORTANT Meeting this Saturday**
Attachments: Agenda for 03_13.pdf

CAUTION! This EXTERNAL email from barry@snellcpa.com originated from outside SMMUSD. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Ben

Here is the zoom link and agenda for Sat March 13 at 11:AM
If you have any questions please contact me.

Thank You

Barry A. Snell

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

From: Santa Monica Black Lives Assc.
Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 3:52 PM
To: Jonelle [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Angela Scott; Marcia Fierro; Andria McFerson; [REDACTED]; Delana Gbenekama; [REDACTED]; Ashley London; Kera Blades; billie310@aol.com; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Delana Gbenekama; [REDACTED]; Ericka L. Reggie Ellis; gena@successinv.com; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Jeneen Jackson; Robbie J5; Joseph Metoyer; Jason Walker; [REDACTED]; Jeffery Kathryn@smc.edu; Bdrati@smmusd.org; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Tony Murphy; Kristin McCowan; Nat Trives; Tiffany Stewart; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Barry Snell; Keith Coleman; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Jonathan Gregory; [REDACTED]; Brenda Suttonwills; Jennell Maze; Erika Mitchell [REDACTED]
Subject: **IMPORTANT Meeting this Saturday

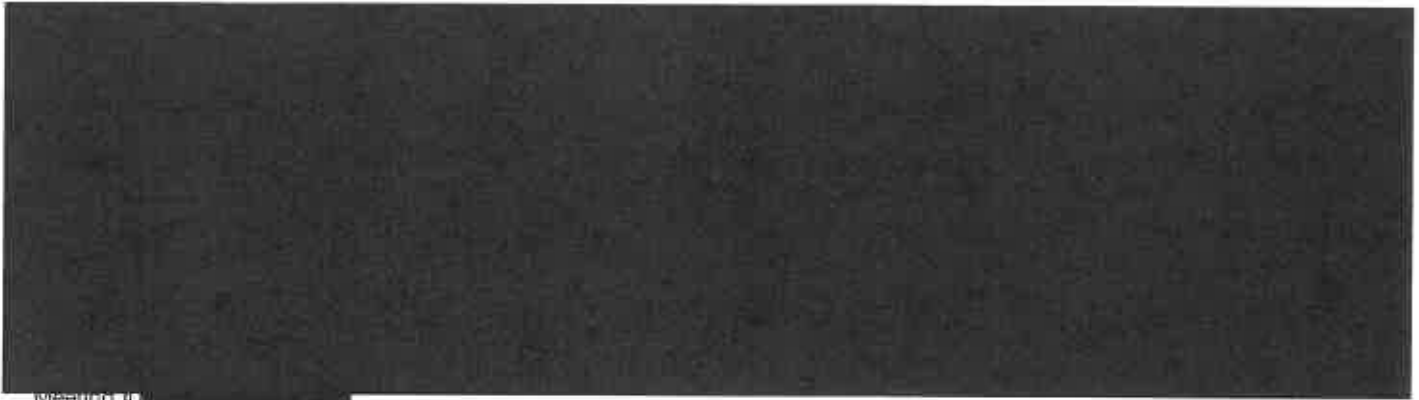
Happy Thursday Everyone!

As we discussed last week, there will be a Black Agenda meeting this Saturday from 11 am-12 pm to discuss the unification of the Santa Monica-Malibu School District Split. Superintendent, Dr. Ben Drati will be joining the meeting to give his overview. We will also be discussing the reopening of schools which makes this a very important meeting to attend seeing that we have two important matters to discuss. Attached is the Agenda for the meeting and the zoom link to join.

If you do not wish to receive emails, please send me an email and let me know. Thank you.

TEMPID05201

Zoom link:



Meeting ID:

Passcode:

One tap mobile:

+13017158592

+13126266799

US (Germantown)

US (Chicago)

Ashley London
Executive Assistant
Santa Monica Black Lives Association

TEMPID05202



The Agenda

11:00-11:10 Introductions and overview of the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization (LACCOSDO)

11:10- 11:30 Overview by Dr. Ben Drati and staff Re: the Malibu/ Santa Monica Unification

11:30-11:45 Questions and answers

11:45-12:00 Update on SMMUSD reopening

ATTACHMENT #5

From: Black Agenda-SM <santamonicablackagenda@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2021 3:57 PM

To: Heredia_Ann <Heredia_Ann@laoe.edu>

Subject: SMMUSD Unification

Dear Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization:

We the Santa Monica Black Agenda oppose the unification petition submitted by Malibu. The petition has failed to meet eight of the nine criteria and is still of tremendous concern for our communities of color. As Malibu has proceeded with the filing of this petition in the worst financial situation in history, it takes precious resources from our respective communities in a time that is of the essence for students to regain some type of normalcy in a worldwide pandemic that has taken a toll on their academic and social-emotional futures. Not to mention the racist undertones and bullying cancel culture that has been displayed of a majority of the supporters of a proposed Malibu School district. No plans have been presented for diversity and inclusion to repair the culture of racial alienation and exclusionary practices. If Malibu succeeds in forming their own district, it is of great concern that it would further alienate the minority demographic of the students/families that attend the Malibu School District and their voices would be silenced. Please deny this petition and encourage both parties to come back to the bargaining table to negotiate an equitable agreement for ALL students and communities involved.

Respectfully,
The Black Agenda

ATTACHMENT #6

From: Ralph Mechur <ralph@rmechurarchitects.com>

Sent: Thursday, April 15, 2021 9:27 PM

To: Heredia_Anna <Heredia_Anna@laoe.edu>

Subject: Malibu Unification hearing

Anna,

Please provide this letter to the Committee members for Saturday's hearing. This letter was published in two Santa Monica news outlets.

Thank you!

Ralph Mechur
1109 Centinela Ave.
Santa Monica, CA 90403

I was disappointed to read School Board Member Craig Foster's published letter in early April regarding SMMUSD's response to the devastating Woolsey Fire. Foster's letter stated that the district did nothing to help the Malibu community during and after the Woolsey fire.

This is not true and Foster knows it. It's disappointing to see my former board colleague be so disingenuous.

These statements are contrary to his public praise of the district and the community of Santa Monica at the end of the board meeting of December 13, 2018. Craig made a particular point to thank the district for all its support and help. He stated, "I really really appreciate the unbelievable consideration that all of you had during this period for what was going on in Malibu. The offers of personal support, community support, from this community, from you guys in particular, from staff.....this district, I think, has walked back from the fires as well or better than anybody could have hoped for. I am really happy with the deliberation and the consultation and the thoughtful steps to slowly but surely reopen the schools...."

Immediately upon notification of the fire, the district immediately mobilized its Emergency Operations Center to focus on all the needs of our families, staff and facilities, as had been practiced for just such an emergency. Foster participated in some of the EOC meetings and learned firsthand of the support and response of every district department.

The district was in direct contact with the agencies responsible for the overall emergency response, waiting for permission to visit our school sites to assess for any building, property and smoke damage. Immediately following the assessment, the district hired an industrial hygienist team and specialized cleaning companies to conduct extensive top to bottom cleaning to ensure safety upon return to campuses for our staff and students. No expense was spared.

Santa Monica PTA leadership and other community groups rallied around Malibu, enveloping our Malibu families and staff with love, support, donations of food, clothing and places to stay.

A Thanksgiving week "Friendsgiving" dinner was provided for hundreds of Malibu families and Malibu staff at Samohi, organized by PTA, teachers and district staff. Truck loads of clothing were offered to families and staff in need. The remaining donations were trucked to the Malibu Boys & Girls Club for further distribution. Thousands of dollars in donations were collected in support of the Malibu community and Santa Monica was happy to help.

When Malibu schools were cleaned and reopened, district staff provided additional counseling, technology, and supplies to students who lost property in the fire. As Mr. Foster said, the district and community were considerate and thoughtful and there for Malibu.

It is unfortunate that in its drive to push the unification effort, some residents of Malibu are willing to be untruthful about actual events and to paint the Superintendent, School Board, district staff and Santa Monica residents as uncaring. Nothing could be further from the truth and Board Member Foster knows it.

Ralph Mechur, former member SMMUSD Board of Education; Santa Monica resident; parent of Samohi alumni

From: Ralph Mechur <ralph@rmechurarchitects.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2021 3:58 PM
To: Heredia_Ana <Heredia_Ana@laoe.edu>
Subject: Letter addressing Malibu Unification hearing September 18, 2021

Dear Ms. Heredia,

Please forward this letter to the Commissioners for this Saturday's hearing.

Sincerely,

--

Ralph Mechur
Ralph Mechur Architects
3400 Airport Avenue, #5
Santa Monica, CA 90405
o: 310-398-2940
m: 310-721-1254

Ralph Mechur
1109 Centinela Ave.
Santa Monica, CA 90403

September 14, 2021

Dear Commissioners,

The proposed Malibu unification plan is incomplete and should be denied. Per the staff report it does not provide an education plan for a future Malibu district, it does not address the negative impact to a Santa Monica district past 10 years, and it does not include enrollment projections. The City of Malibu should negotiate directly with the school district to create a plan to present to you that objectively addresses the 8 of 9 criteria it may not meet and how Santa Monica and Malibu residents will continue to provide an excellent education to all students at the current high levels.

Santa Monica recognizes that Malibu would like to govern its own schools and does not object in concept to this occurring. However, it cannot occur at the expense of the education of the students in one of the communities.

Santa Monica will support a reasonable plan. This is not a reasonable plan and it should be rejected this Saturday.

I am writing as a Santa Monica resident but also as a past Santa Monica-Malibu School Board trustee from 2007-2020. I welcome the opportunity to further discuss this issue with you should you so choose. I can be reached at 310-721-1254.

Sincerely,
Ralph Mechur

ATKINSON, ANDELSON, LOYA, RUUD & ROMO

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May 19, 2025

May 19, 2025
Michelle Cervera
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mcervera@counsel.lacounty.gov

Kristen Rogers
Olson Remcho
1901 Harrison Street, Suite 1550
Oakland, CA 94612
krogers@olsonremcho.com

Re: Alleged Conflict of Interest of Barry Snell and Ralph Mechur

Dear Ms. Cervera and Ms. Rogers:

On behalf of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District ("District"), we are writing to object to the City of Malibu's latest attempt to manipulate the vote of the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization ("County Committee").

On April 2, 2025, the County Committee voted 6-5 to deny the City of Malibu's 2017 petition to form a unified school district in Malibu. Due to procedural concerns, we have been informed that a clarifying vote is scheduled to take place at the County Committee's next meeting on May 29, 2025. Importantly, this is ***not*** a vote pursuant to a motion for reconsideration where new facts and evidence are to be introduced. Rather, the vote has *already* transpired and simply requires clarification for the record.

There can be no doubt that the individuals who voted against the 2017 petition did so intentionally after multiple prior public hearings, a lengthy presentation by staff, consultants and many public comments and written correspondence. Of necessity, those who have already voted should be involved in clarifying their past vote. No one should be prevented from doing so as this is not a "new vote."

Despite this fact, the City of Malibu now seeks to disqualify two members of the County Committee who ***already*** voted to deny the City's petition, Barry Snell and Ralph Mechur. The

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timing of this maneuver is not only highly suspect, it is also a callous attempt to subvert the democratic process and rig the vote in the City's favor. It's the equivalent of a party attempting to disqualify a judge *after* the judge has issued an unfavorable ruling against them. Interestingly, the City did not raise this issue at the April 2nd meeting prior to the vote. The City of Malibu, having failed to convince the County Committee of the merits of its 2017 petition is now clearly attempting to stack the deck in its favor. Such a disregard for democratic norms and the applicable case law should be rejected as it would tarnish the reputation of the County Committee; making it appear susceptible to political gamesmanship and would deny the District of a fair proceeding and a result it had already obtained.

THE CITY'S ALLEGATIONS

In its letter, the City alleges that Mr. Snell should be disqualified because he served on the District Board of Education from 2006-2010,¹ that he is a member of Community for Excellent Public Schools ("CEPS") and the Santa Monica Black Lives Association (SMBLA) which purportedly oppose an independent school district (as such district is proposed by the City of Malibu in its 2017 petition) and that SMBLA hosted a meeting on March 13, 2021 in which a former Superintendent spoke in opposition to the City's 2017 petition. As discussed below, the case law requires a showing of *actual* bias to the City's petition. Just being a former member of the Board of Education and a member of community groups that allegedly oppose a particular formulation of a formation of an independent school district in Malibu falls far short of showing actual bias.

The City alleges that Mr. Mechur should be disqualified because he served on the District Board of Education from 2007-2020, made comments before the County Committee in 2021, has a partner who is the executive director of Santa Monica Education Foundation, and has been hired to perform architectural work for a current District board member. The City only provides documentary support for the allegations regarding the comments made by Mr. Mechur in an email dated September 14, 2021 (Exhibit 6 to the City's Letter) in which Mr. Mechur cites the LACOE staff report stating the the proposed Malibu plan is incomplete and should be denied because it does not address the negative impact on the District past 10 years and it does not include enrollment projections. Mr. Mechur further states in his correspondence to the County Committee, "Santa Monica will support a reasonable plan. This is not a reasonable plan and it should be rejected this Saturday."

Clearly, these comments fall woefully short of actual bias. Mr. Merchur's comments actually show that he is open to a more reasonable plan from the City of Malibu and negate *any* allegations of actual bias.

¹ Education Code section 4007 provides that even current Board of Education members can serve on County Committees.

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APPLICABLE CASE LAW

It should be noted that the City of Malibu's citation of case law in its May 7, 2025, letter ironically *supports* denial of their request to disqualify Mr. Snell and Mr. Mechur. While the City's letter accurately cites *Gerawan Farming, Inc.*² and *Morongo Board of Mission Indians v. State Water Resources Board*³ as stating that the constitutional guarantee of due process requires a fair tribunal and that a fair tribunal is one in which the decision maker is free of bias for or against a party, the City's letter fails to provide a comprehensive analysis of what constitutes a fair tribunal free of bias in the administrative context.

In *Gerawan Farming*, the Court of Appeal noted that while the requirements of due process extend to administrative adjudications, the standard of impartiality required at the administrative hearing is less exacting than that required in a judicial proceeding.⁴ Where a non-financial conflict of interest is alleged, as in this case, a party must demonstrate actual bias or circumstances in which experience teaches that the high probability of actual bias on the part of the decision maker is too high to be constitutionally tolerable.⁵

The presumption of impartiality may be overcome only by specific evidence demonstrating actual bias or a particular set of circumstances creating an unacceptable risk of bias.⁶ The mere appearance of bias is not grounds for disqualification.⁷ The bias or prejudice must be sufficient to impair the decision maker's impartiality.⁸ A mere suggestion of bias is not sufficient to overcome the presumption of integrity and honesty.⁹ A decision maker is not disqualified simply he or she has taken a position, even in public, on a policy issue related to the dispute, in the absence of a showing that he or she is not capable of judging the particular controversy fairly on the basis of its own circumstances.¹⁰

An example of what is required to show actual bias and disqualify a decision maker is set forth in a matter involving current school board members rather than former school board members. In *Hortonville Joint School District No. 1 v. Hortonville Education Association*, the United States Supreme Court held that school board members were not disqualified from deciding whether striking teachers may be dismissed for violating state law even though the school board members

² 52 Cal.App.5th 141, 207 (2020).

³ 45 Cal.4th 731 (2009).

⁴ 52 Cal.App.5th 141, 207 (2020).

⁵ Id. at 208. See, also, *Today's Fresh Start v. Los Angeles County Office of Education* (2013) 57 Cal.4th 197, 219.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Id. at 208-209. See, also, *Hortonville Joint School District No. 1 v. Hortonville Education Association* (1976) 426 U.S. 482, 96 S.Ct. 2308.

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were involved in negotiations that deadlocked and led to the strike.¹¹ The Supreme Court reversed a decision by the Wisconsin Supreme Court and held that due process provisions were not violated because there was no finding that the school board members had a personal or financial interest in the teacher's dismissal.¹²

During the 1972-1973 school year, Hortonville teachers worked under a collective bargaining agreement. Negotiations were conducted to renew the contract, but no agreement was reached for the 1973-1974 school year. The teachers continued to work while negotiations proceeded without reaching an agreement. On March 18, 1974, the teachers went on strike in direct violation of state law which prohibited teachers from striking. On March 20, the district superintendent sent all striking teachers a letter inviting them to return to work. A few teachers returned to work.¹³

On March 23, the district superintendent sent another letter, asking the 85 teachers still on strike to return to work, and reminding them that strikes are illegal under Wisconsin state law. None of the 85 teachers returned to work.¹⁴

After conducting classes with substitute teachers on March 26 and 27, the Board of Education decided to conduct disciplinary hearings for each of the teachers on strike. Individual notices were sent to each teacher setting hearings for April 1, 2, and 3.¹⁵

On April 1, most of the striking teachers appeared before the Board of Education with legal counsel. Their attorney requested a group hearing and stipulated that the teachers had gone on strike. The teachers' attorney argued that the Board of Education was not sufficiently impartial to hold the hearing because the strike had been provoked by the Board of Education's failure to meet the teachers' demands, the Board of Education's contract offers were unsatisfactory, that the Board of Education used coercive and illegal bargaining tactics, and that teachers in the District had been locked out by the Board of Education.¹⁶

On April 2, the Board of Education voted to terminate the employment of the striking teachers and sent them a letter notifying them of their termination. The letter also invited all teachers on strike to reapply for teaching positions. One teacher accepted the invitation and returned to work. The Board of Education then hired replacements for the striking teachers.¹⁷

The teachers then filed suit against the Board of Education in state court alleging violations of due

¹¹ Id. at 484.

¹² Id. at 491-492.

¹³ Id. at 484.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Id. at 484-485.

¹⁷ Id. at 485.

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process. The trial court ruled in favor of the Board of Education and, on appeal the Wisconsin Supreme Court reversed and held that the due process rights of the teachers had been violated, even though the teachers had engaged in an illegal strike under Wisconsin law.¹⁸

The Supreme Court reviewed the ruling of the Wisconsin Supreme Court and concluded that the mere fact that the school board members were involved in collective bargaining negotiations that preceded and precipitated the teacher's dismissal was insufficient to disqualify the board members from deciding whether the teachers should be dismissed for violating state law prohibiting teachers from striking.¹⁹ The Supreme Court stated, "Mere familiarity with the facts of a case gained by an agency in the performance of its statutory duties does not, however, disqualify a decisionmaker. ...Nor is a decisionmaker disqualified simply because he has taken a position, even in public, on a policy issue related to the dispute, in the absence of a showing that he is not 'capable of judging a particular controversy fairly on the basis of its circumstances.'"²⁰

The Supreme Court concluded that the teachers had failed to demonstrate that the decision to terminate their employment was infected by the sort of bias that would disqualify the school board members. A showing that the board members were involved in the events preceding the decision to dismiss the teacher is not enough to overcome the presumption of honesty and integrity in policymakers with decision making power.²¹

The City's citation of the County Committee's policy is also misplaced. The policy is not mandatory but merely states that a member should abstain from voting if there is a perceived conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. The policy must be read in the context of the case law cited above that unless decision makers have a financial interest in the outcome, decision makers are presumed to be impartial.²²

CONCLUSION

Based on the applicable case law, the City has failed to meet its burden of proof to show actual bias. Mr. Snell and Mr. Mechur should not be disqualified simply because they served on the District Board of Education in the past. In *Hortonville*, the United States Supreme Court did not disqualify current board members from deciding to dismiss striking teachers even though the Board of Education was involved in the collective bargaining negotiations that preceded the strike and was accused of provoking the strike and using coercive and illegal bargaining tactics.

The City has produced no evidence that Mr. Snell or Mr. Mechur made any statement showing

¹⁸ Id. at 486.

¹⁹ Id. at 492-493.

²⁰ Id. at 493. See, also, *United States v. Morgan* (1941) 313 U.S. 409, 421.

²¹ Id. at 496-497.

²² *Morongo Band of Mission Indians v. State Water Resources Control Board* (2009) 45 Cal.4th 731, 737.

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that they had prejudged the City's petition when they voted to deny the City's petition on April 2, 2025. The documents provided by the City are mostly from 2021, *four years prior* to the vote on April 2nd and importantly, *years* before the City's "alternative feasibility study" upon which the City based its 2017 petition most recently and *years* before the preparation of the staff and consultant's reports on the 2017 petition that were presented to the County Committee at its April 2nd meeting.

It is also important to note that the City has previously (and unsuccessfully) attempted to disqualify both Mr. Mechur and Mr. Snell. The County Committee has always rejected those attempts in the past. To reverse course now, after the vote has occurred and based upon information that was already available to the County Committee when it rejected the City's past attempts would discredit the County Committee and unduly prejudice the District.

By taking advantage of a procedural error that may have occurred in the April 2nd vote, the City is seeking to reverse the vote against their 2017 petition, not on the merits, but by a callous political maneuver designed to disqualify the exact number of votes needed to change the vote against the City's 2017 petition that has *already occurred*.

For all of the reasons set forth above, this scheme should be rejected in its entirety.

Sincerely,

ATKINSON, ANDELSON, LOYA, RUUD & ROMO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Soldani", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

David A. Soldani

RDW:das



Christine N. Wood
Partner
(213) 542-3861
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May 22, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Michelle Cervera
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Kristen Rogers
Olson Remcho
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Oakland, California 94612
Email: krogers@olsonremcho.com

*Re: Conflicts of Interest of Barry Snell and Ralph Mechur in Relation to City
of Malibu's Petition to Form Malibu Unified School District*

Dear Ms. Cervera and Ms. Rogers:

The City of Malibu ("City") writes in response to Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's ("District") letter to the County Counsel's office dated May 19, 2025 ("District Letter"). The District Letter responded to the City's May 7, 2025, letter ("City Letter"), to the County Counsel in which the City asserted that Ralph Mechur and Barry Snell's involvement in Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization's ("County Committee") vote on the City's Petition to form the Malibu Unified School District ("City's Petition") presented a prohibited conflict.

In short, the District Letter takes the position that the City had not "met its burden of proof" to show that Mr. Mechur and Mr. Snell's participation in the vote on the City's Petition presented a conflict of interest. (District Letter, p. 5.) As the District sees it, because the City did not establish "actual bias," there was no due process violation arising from Mr. Mechur and Mr. Snell's (collectively, "Committee Members") participation in County Committee's vote on the City's Petition. (*Ibid.*) The District misapprehends the purpose of the City's Letter and is wrong on the law.

First, the District's erroneous focus on the City's purported "burden of proof" (as if the City was writing an opening brief in an adversarial, judicial proceeding) misses the City's point. The City requested that the County "issue a statement" regarding Committee Members' ability to vote on the City's Petition. Indeed, the City reiterated that it had raised these issues two times before (in 2019 and 2021) without any response from the County Committee or the County. A

statement from the County Counsel, or Mr. Mechur and Mr. Snell themselves, as to the basis of the decision for the Committee Members to not recuse themselves is entirely appropriate because the Policies of the Los Angeles County Committee (the “County Committee Policies”) vest the discretion in the individual committee members to decide whether they possess a prohibited conflict that require them to abstain from a vote. (See County Committee Policies, § (I)(F)(9) [**“A member should abstain from voting on any issue before the County Committee where such a vote will result in either a real or perceived conflict of interest”**].)

Apparently, either the Committee Members or County Counsel, has determined that no such conflict exists. The City should understand the basis of that decision so that the City can determine whether that decision was reasonable or was “arbitrary, capricious or entirely lacking in evidentiary support.” (*Fair Education Santa Barbara v. Santa Barbara Unified School Dist.* (2021) 72 Cal.App.5th 884, 895.) Further, if no decision had been made prior to the procedurally flawed vote on April 2, 2025, the City requests that either County Counsel provide a reason that the Committee Members need not abstain from a voting on the City’s Petition prior to the vote on May 29, 2025, or that the Committee Members state in open session the basis for their decision.

Such an understanding is of paramount public interest because where a public entity’s governing body makes a decision infected by a conflict of interest, the resulting act is void, ultra vires, and of no effect. (See, e.g., *Clark v. City of Hermosa Beach* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1152, 1171 (*Clark*), [quoting 4 McQuillin, *The Law of Municipal Corporations* (3d ed. rev. 1992) § 13.35, pp. 840–841 [“Where the vote of a member interested is necessary to pass an ordinance or bylaw, such ordinance or bylaw is void, irrespective of how beneficial the ordinance may be.”]; *San Luis Obispo Loc. Agency Formation Comm’n v. Cent. Coast Dev. Co.* (2022) 78 Cal.App.5th 363, 368, citing *California-American Water Co. v. Marina Coast Water Dist.* (2017) 18 Cal.App.5th 571, 580 [noting contract void and ultra vires when agency member had a conflict of interest under Government Code section 1090].)

Second, the District misrepresents and misapplies the law. The District states “[w]here a non-financial conflict of interest is alleged, as in this case, a party must demonstrate actual bias or circumstances in which experience teaches that the high probability of actual bias on the part of the decision maker is too high to be constitutionally tolerable.” (District Letter, p. 3.)

Even if that were correct (it is not, as explained *infra*), this would only apply to a due process analysis. The **County Committee’s policies expressly provide for recusal based on the mere appearance of a conflict**. (See County Committee Policies, § (I)(F)(9) [**“A member should abstain from voting on any issue before the County Committee where such a vote will result in either a real or perceived conflict of interest....Members should avoid voting on issues where such a vote may even give the appearance of a conflict of interest.”**], emphasis added.) The Committee Members must comply with their own internal procedures. The City provided evidence that the Committee Members’ past service on the District’s governing board, active participation in community groups advocacy against the City’s Petition, and public statements against the City’s Petition placed the Committee Members in a position where their private interests in the continued existence of SM-MUSD conflicted with their obligation to neutrally evaluate the City’s Petition.

(See *Clark, supra*, 48 Cal.App.4th at p. 1171; see also *California Manufacturers & Tech. Assn. v. Off. of Env't Health Hazard Assessment* (2023) 89 Cal.App.5th 756, 775; 70 Cal. Op. (1987) Att'y Gen. 45.) Moreover, even if the evidence did not establish this interest conclusively, that is irrelevant because, when it comes to general common law conflicts,¹ “[i]t is not just actual improprieties which the law seeks to forestall but also the appearance of possible improprieties.” (70 Cal. Op. (1987) Att'y Gen. 45, quoting *Witt v. Morrow* (1977) 70 Cal.App.3d 817, 823.)

The District does not dispute this evidence and instead relies on a test not applicable to the County Committee Policies. The remedy for a conflict of interest would be for the Committee Members to have abstained from any vote on the City's Petition, and the City and public deserve to know why such an abstention did not occur on April 2, 2025, or will not occur on May 29, 2025. (See *The California Municipal Law Handbook* (Cal. CEB 2024) §2.161 [“A common law conflict usually can be avoided by the official's complete abstention from any official action on the matter, or any attempt to influence it.”].)

Moreover, the District misstates the test in *Gerawan Farming, Inc. v. Agricultural Labor Relations Board* (2020) 52 Cal.App.5th 141 (*Gerawan*). The Court of Appeal in *Gerawan* stated that a due process violation arises upon a showing based on specific evidence of “actual bias **or** a particular combination of circumstances creating an unacceptable risk of bias.” (*Id.* at p. 208, emphasis added.) This is a disjunctive test, meaning that a party can either show (1) actual bias, or (2) a combination of circumstances creating an unacceptable risk of bias.

As set forth in the City's Letter, the particular circumstances involved in this case tend to show an unacceptable risk of bias. Indeed, the City Letter provides evidence that distinguishes the issues here from *Gerawan*. In *Gerawan*, the Court of Appeal reasoned that the decision maker “did not make any statement concerning the resolution of any matter that was pending before the Board” and “did not make public statements that were indicative of prejudgment of this case.” (*Gerawan, supra*, 52 Cal.App.5th at p. 209-210.) For example, as to Mr. Mechur, the City's Letter provided evidence that “he had made several public comments before the County Committee against the City's petition in the 2021 preliminary public hearings.” (City Letter, p. 3, citing Attachment #6.) Unlike *Gerawan*, Mr. Mechur made public statements adverse to the City's Petition in front of the very body now voting on the City's Petition that show “he is not capable of judging [this] particular controversy fairly on the basis of its own circumstances” and “had already thrown his weight on the other side.” (*Gerawan, supra*, 52 Cal. App. 5th at p. 208-210.)

It is for that reason that the District's reliance on the Supreme Court's decision *Joint Sch. Dist. No. 1 v. Hortonville Educ. Ass'n* (1976) 426 U.S. 482 (*Hortonville*) is misplaced. In *Hortonville*, the Supreme Court based its decision on the unremarkable proposition that “a decision maker cannot be disqualified simply because “he has taken a position, even in public, on a policy

¹ The County Committee Policies appear to have codified common law conflicts of interest, that not only apply to non-economic interests but also apply where there may be an appearance of impropriety. (See *Clark, supra*, 48 Cal.App.4th at p. 1171; see also *California Manufacturers & Tech. Assn. v. Off. of Env't Health Hazard Assessment, supra*, 89 Cal.App.5th at p. 775; 70 Cal. Op. (1987) Att'y Gen. 45, quoting *Witt v. Morrow, supra*, 70 Cal.App.3d at p. 823.)

issue related to the dispute, in the absence of a showing that he is not ‘capable of judging a particular controversy fairly on the basis of its own circumstances.’” (*Id.* at p. 493.) However, *Hortonville* only analyzed **actual bias**, not particular combination of circumstances creating an unacceptable risk of bias. Thus, that point of law is inapposite here in light of the above-discussed facts evidence by the City that show the Committee Members cannot judge the City’s Petition based on the merits of the Petition itself, and not their own private interests.

Finally, the District’s statements concerning the City’s efforts to undermine democracy are inflammatory and wrong. Contrary to the District’s statements, James Madison in Federalist No. 10 wrote that the principles underlying our democratic republic are aimed at thwarting the impacts that “faction[s]” may have on democratic decision making. James Madison described a “faction” as “a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.” He wrote that these factions created a “prevailing and increasing distrust of public engagements” and “the unsteadiness and injustice” that had “tainted our public administrations” arose, at least partially, from this “factious spirit.” Rather than undermining our representative democracy, the City’s efforts to ensure a fair process are aimed at increasing public trust in the County Committee’s decision on the City’s Petition by eliminating any potential that a minority of the County Committee may be basing their decisions, not on the common good, but their private interests in preserving the SM-MUSD as former board members.

In short, the City deserves and requests an explanation as to why Mr. Mechur and Mr. Snell should not recuse themselves from the vote on May 29, 2025, or why they did not recuse themselves on April 2, 2025.

Sincerely,



Christine N. Wood
of BEST BEST & KRIEGER LLP

CW:ZS



**Los Angeles County Committee on
School District Organization**
c/o Los Angeles County Office of Education
9300 Imperial Highway, Downey, CA 90242-2890

Attachment

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMITTEE ON
SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION (COUNTY COMMITTEE)
LEGISLATIVE REVIEW – MAY 2025**

BILL NUMBER/AUTHOR: Assembly Bill 259 / Blanca Rubio	INTRODUCTION DATE: 01/16/25	LAST ACTIVITY/DATE: 05/14/25: Referred to Senate Judiciary and Local Gov't Committees.
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DESCRIPTION OF BILL

This bill would eliminate the sunset date of January 1, 2026, on provisions of law enacted by AB 2449 in 2022, which allowed members of a legislative body of a local agency to use teleconferencing without identifying each teleconference location in the notice and agenda of the meeting, and without making each teleconference location accessible to the public, under specified conditions, thereby extending them indefinitely.

**POTENTIAL IMPACT OF BILL ON LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMITTEE, SCHOOL
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION PROCESS AND/OR LOS ANGELES COUNTY SCHOOL
DISTRICTS**

This bill may provide this body and all other LEAs more flexibility in being able to fully participate in meetings remotely if certain conditions are met.

RECOMMENDED POSITION

Staff recommends the following position:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☒ Watch | Bill should be monitored by County Committee staff, but no action taken at this time. |
| ☐ Approve | County Committee supports the bill's concept, but will not actively work for passage. |
| ☐ Support | County Committee actively supports the bill. |
| ☐ Oppose | County Committee actively opposes the bill. |
| ☐ Disapprove | County Committee disapproves of the bill's concept, but will not actively oppose passage. |

BILL NUMBER/AUTHOR: Senate Bill 226 / Cabaldon	INTRODUCTION DATE: 01/28/25	LAST ACTIVITY/DATE: 05/15/25: Senate Appr. Committee Hearing set for May 23.
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DESCRIPTION OF BILL

This bill would authorize the board of governors to approve territory transfers between community college districts upon its own initiative or upon the filing of a petition by the district's board, or by the county committee for the county where territory would be transferred. The bill only applies to counties with at least three CCDs, and the board of governors may approve the transfer without putting the measure before voters.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF BILL ON LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMITTEE, SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION PROCESS AND/OR LOS ANGELES COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This bill could possibly increase petition activity related to CCD territory transfer proposals.

RECOMMENDED POSITION

Staff recommends the following position:

- ☒ **Watch** Bill should be monitored by County Committee staff, but no action taken at this time.
- ☐ **Approve** County Committee supports the bill's concept, but will not actively work for passage.
- ☐ **Support** County Committee actively supports the bill.
- ☐ **Oppose** County Committee actively opposes the bill.
- ☐ **Disapprove** County Committee disapproves of the bill's concept, but will not actively oppose passage.

BILL NUMBER/AUTHOR: Assembly Bill 1147 / Hoover	INTRODUCTION DATE: 02-20-25	LAST ACTIVITY/DATE: 04/02/25: Assembly Educ. Committee first hearing set; hearing cancelled at author's request.
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DESCRIPTION OF BILL

This bill would create a new chapter in Educ. Code Title 2 so that a city could petition the CDE directly if the city wants to transfer territory from one school district to another, without asking the County Committee nor the State Board of Education (SBE). The CDE would be authorized to grant the city's request if three conditions are met:

- (1) At least 95% of a city is contained within the boundaries of a single school district.
- (2) There are no school facilities located within the territory being transferred.
- (3) By majority vote, a city council petitions the CDE to have all of the territory within its city boundaries to be contained within a single school district.

The bill would let CDE approve a territory transfer agreement between the impacted school districts and the city, and to establish limited and temporary financial remuneration requirements that must be paid, by either the acquiring school district or the petitioning city, to the school district that is relinquishing territory. The remuneration may be paid through the temporary transfer of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) generated apportionments attributable to transferred pupils from the acquiring school district to the school district that is relinquishing the territory or as otherwise determined by the department. CDE would be required to develop regulations for this process. Chapter 3 commencing with Section 35500 shall apply to reorganizations pursuant to this new chapter to the extent that they do not conflict.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF BILL ON LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMITTEE, SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION PROCESS AND/OR LOS ANGELES COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This bill is ill-advised, with incalculable long-term repercussions, such as:

1. Empowering three non-education temporary individuals (of the typical five-member city council) to more easily instigate permanent changes to school districts to the detriment of students and communities.
2. Disenfranchising school districts from having voices in their own fates by removing LEAs power from the equation.
3. Silencing public comment and participation via fast-tracked proposals by removing the local-level public hearings, meetings, and outreach conducted by county committees.
4. Politicizing school district administration and CDE leadership changes to a heretofore unseen and unimaginable level.
5. Establishing an Us vs Them model in which wealthier areas will fiscally injure less affluent portions of school districts via the bill's "temporary" and "limited" transfer of ADA dollars as "remuneration".

The legislature has consistently mandated that the process of permanently altering school district boundaries needs to involve the County Superintendent reviewing petitions before they may enter the County Committee's review process. County Committees conduct public hearings within the affected

districts, followed by the County Committee considering complex issues related to educational programs, in addition to parental engagement and involvement, as well as intra-district, inter-district, municipal, regional, community, and environmental issues, before voting on school district organization proposals. If the county-level decision is appealed or otherwise required to go before the State Board of Education (SBE), the studying of the issues is by-design done anew, whereby the SBE does not render its decision until after assessing all of the factors independently and in-depth, typically for at least two years.

The prospect of a temporary leadership change at CDE resulting in carte blanche politically aligned approvals would have consequences for communities and the children they serve that would span decades.

RECOMMENDED POSITION

Staff recommends the following position:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| ☐ | Watch | Bill should be monitored by County Committee staff, but no action taken at this time. |
| ☐ | Approve | County Committee supports the bill's concept, but will not actively work for passage. |
| ☐ | Support | County Committee actively supports the bill. |
| ☒ | Oppose | County Committee actively opposes the bill. |
| ☐ | Disapprove | County Committee disapproves of the bill's concept, but will not actively oppose passage. |

BILL NUMBER / AUTHOR: Assembly Bill 1079 / Avila Farias	INTRODUCTION DATE: 02-20-25	LAST ACTIVITY/DATE: 05/07/25: Read second time in Assembly. Ordered to third reading
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DESCRIPTION OF BILL

This bill would allow a trial court's ruling to not be stayed irrespective of the perfecting of an appeal, if a trial court has found that a party's at-large method of election violates, or is likely to violate, the CVRA or the FAIR Maps Act. However, the trial court's ruling is stayed if the trial court, or both the Secretary of State and the Attorney General file certification with the trial court that waiting on the appellate court's ruling will further the purposes of either Act, or orderly elections.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF BILL ON LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMITTEE, SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION PROCESS AND/OR LOS ANGELES COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This bill could be costly for districts depending on various factors culminating in an appellate court's decision(s), since districts would potentially have to divert additional public resources from their general fund, i.e., classroom funding, on additional legal and demographic costs beyond what they expended leading up to and during the trial court's ruling.

RECOMMENDED POSITION

Staff recommends the following position:

- ☒ **Watch** Bill should be monitored by County Committee staff, but no action taken at this time.
- ☐ **Approve** County Committee supports the bill's concept, but will not actively work for passage.
- ☐ **Support** County Committee actively supports the bill.
- ☐ **Oppose** County Committee actively opposes the bill.
- ☐ **Disapprove** County Committee disapproves of the bill's concept, but will not actively oppose passage.

AMENDMENTS REQUIRED

If staff's recommended position is based on the need for amendments to the bill language, suggested alternative language is attached.

CORRESPONDENCE REQUIRED

If staff's recommended position is based on the need for correspondence to the bill's author, the Governor or other governmental officials, a draft of suggested language is attached.

Please direct comments to Ms. April Mitchell, Acting Secretary to the County Committee at (562) 922-6131.



**Los Angeles County Committee on
School District Organization**
c/o Los Angeles County Office of Education
9300 Imperial Highway, Downey, CA 90242-2890

Attachment

Summary of Los Angeles Unified School District Reorganization Proposals

May 2025

The following is a summary of school district reorganization proposals affecting the Los Angeles Unified School District (USD) that were at various stages in the school district organization process as of May 6, 2025.

PETITION TO TRANSFER TERRITORY FROM THE LOS ANGELES USD (LAUSD) TO THE PALOS VERDES PENINSULA USD (PVPUSD)

On July 10, 2019, Chadmar/Colfin Rolling Hills, LLC., submitted an owner petition to transfer five parcels of uninhabited territory from LAUSD to PVPUSD. At the September 4, 2019, regularly scheduled County Committee meeting, the petition was to be introduced to the County Committee. However, Chadmar's new counsel, David Soldani, addressed the County Committee and requested that the petition be withdrawn at that time. At the County Committee's regular meeting on March 3, 2021, Mr. Soldani provided the update that only four parcels may need to be transferred, and that the revised petition would likely be resubmitted within the next few months.

Status: Petition temporarily withdrawn, to be resubmitted
Status Date: March 3, 2021

RECENT INQUIRIES REGARDING REORGANIZATION (within the last two years)

Formation Proposals/Last Activity Date

- Inner City USD / April 2024

Transfer of Territory Proposals/Last Activity Date

- Inglewood USD to LAUSD / April 2023
- LAUSD to Palos Verdes Peninsula USD / March 2021

This document was prepared by staff to the County Committee.



**Los Angeles County Committee on
School District Organization**
c/o Los Angeles County Office of Education
9300 Imperial Highway, Downey, CA 90242-2890

Attachment

**Summary of Los Angeles County School District Reorganization Proposals
(Excluding those pertaining to Los Angeles Unified School District)**

May 2025

The following is a summary of school district reorganization proposals [excluding the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)] that are at various stages in the school district reorganization process as of May 15, 2025.

FORMATION – PROPOSAL TO CREATE A MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (USD) OUT OF TERRITORY CURRENTLY WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE SANTA MONICA-MALIBU USD

On September 1, 2017, LACOE received a petition in the form of a 2015 resolution from the City of Malibu to form a separate Malibu USD from territory within the boundaries of the existing Santa Monica-Malibu USD (SMMUSD). The petition was introduced at the November 1, 2017 regular County Committee meeting, and at least one public hearing was to be scheduled. After this local agency petition was introduced, however, the City of Malibu sent a letter requesting that the County Committee postpone the scheduling of its preliminary hearing to allow the stakeholders more time to discuss further options and details regarding the petition.

On February 28, 2018, however, the City of Malibu apprised the committee of their interest in pursuing the preliminary public hearing. Then, in April 2018, the City resolved to further investigate options before asking the County Committee to proceed. At its May 2, 2018 regular meeting, the County Committee voted to delay scheduling the preliminary public hearing until after getting an update on negotiations at its regularly scheduled meeting on September 5, 2018. On September 5, 2018, representatives from the City of Malibu and the SMMUSD apprised the County Committee of their negotiations, and again at the March 6, 2019 meeting. On May 10, 2019, staff met with the district to ascertain the status of its ongoing study and analyses. The parties to the petition returned to the committee on September 4, 2019, October 2, 2019, November 6, 2019, January 8, 2020, and March 4, 2020 to provide updates on their studies.

On August 5, 2020, the school district's attorney apprised the committee that the impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis on the school district- and on the city- had put a pause on their negotiations. On October 7, 2020, counsel for the City of Malibu said the pursuit of a legislative solution on the splitting of the parcel tax had stalled, and that on October 12, 2020, the City of Malibu would be considering hiring a third consultant to provide a new fiscal review on the petition. On October 29, 2020, the city manager sent the city council's request that the petition be reactivated and that the County Committee's process move forward.

At the County Committee's regularly scheduled meeting on December 2, 2020, the initial preliminary public hearing was scheduled for Saturday, April 17, 2021, pending public health concerns about the viability at that time of having an in-person public hearing. On March 3, 2021, the County Committee voted to conduct a virtual preliminary public hearing on April 17, 2021. That event was held and attended by more than 300 people. The County Committee heard testimony from the City of Malibu, the SMMUSD, and both proponents and opponents of the petition. The County Committee concluded the preliminary public hearing on September 18, 2021, after which it approved moving the petition into the regular County Committee petition review process.

The County Committee held a virtual public hearing on November 10, 2021. At the County Committee's regular meeting on February 2, 2022, the City of Malibu requested that the County Committee delay further review of the petition in consideration of pending negotiations with the SMMUSD in March. At the County Committee's regular meeting on March 2, 2022, the City of Malibu apprised the County Committee that there are two meetings scheduled between the parties in March, and that a status update would be provided before the County Committee's regular meeting in April. On April 19, 2022, representatives of the City of Malibu notified staff that they are still negotiating with the SMMUSD and would like to delay hearing the petition. On February 1, 2023, staff received what the parties called a "Term Sheet" jointly from representatives of the City of Malibu, and from the SMMUSD. At the County Committee's regular meetings throughout 2023, representatives for the City of Malibu and the SMMUSD (attorneys Christine Wood and David Soldani) appeared online or in-person consistently to offer commentary. Mr. Dale Larsen, representing the SMMUSD on the trustee area petition, also appeared and related it to the petition to form a Malibu USD. Ms. Wood disputed the report of comments she made at one of the 2023 meetings so staff began reviewing all County Committee recordings from 2023 to document (in brief) when the representatives spoke and comments they offered. Below is a recounting of meetings reviewed:

March 1, 2023, LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 55:45 mark, Soldani requested that the CC delay review of petitioners' SB 442 CVRA petition until after the unification is settled. It is unclear from the recording whether Wood attended.

April 5, 2023, LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 1:33:45 mark, Soldani stated that the parties are continuing to negotiate and are making progress.

At the 1:34:49 mark, Wood spoke and "agrees with Dr. Deegan's updates," and agreed with everything Soldani had just said in his update.

May 3, 2023, LACCSDO Meeting:

At about the 24:00 mark, Dr. Deegan debriefed the phone consultation staff had conducted with Ms. Wood and Mr. Soldani, including the recommendation to revoke the current petition, since the parties' current activities and negotiations no longer comport with the former city council's 2015 original resolution.

At the 26:15 mark, Wood said she concurred with Dr. Deegan's update.

At the 26:40 mark, Wood said "we have been coming to your meetings for several months now with updates on our joint negotiations," and she recapped that they had mediation sessions on 03-12-22, 04-02-22, 07-09-22, and the next one would occur on 08-08-23.

At the 29:30 mark, Wood conveyed that both sides are on the same page with their mutually shared goals.

June 7, 2023, LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 44:00 mark, Soldani read aloud a prepared statement by SMMUSD Governing Board Member Laurie Lieberman.

At the 46:47 mark, Soldani had concluded reading Lieberman's statement; he then requested that the CC lay out detailed expectations for the CVRA petition's public hearings, especially under the new procedures which the CC has never done before, and which some of the members appear to need more clarity about.

At the 52:15 mark, Dale Larson, representing the SMMUSD district in the trustee area matter, said the CVRA petition should be paused until the unification petition is resolved.

At the 1:17:50 mark, Soldani reiterated that 08-08-23 will be the next mediation between the parties.

July (Meeting Cancelled)

August (Meeting Cancelled)

September 6, 2023, LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 1:04:45 mark, Wood said the parties received an independent analysis which created a formula to monetize the Term Sheet the parties had created, and that both parties have agreed to the formula.

At the 1:06:50 mark, Soldani said he agreed to everything Wood had just conveyed to the County Committee, and that the next mediation on 10-17-23 has the goal of trying to agree to timelines and whether the City of Malibu is willing to withdraw its original petition and whether the SMMUSD would then file its own petition.

October 4, 2023 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 1:34:35 mark, Wood said she had no updates beyond what Dr. Deegan had shared during the staff update. She said she was attending the meeting in case the CC had questions.

At the 1:35:45 mark, Wood said the parties had reached terms on a Per Pupil Funding Formula, and that they were in the process of negotiating contingency agreements for that, as well as various contingencies associated with Operational Agreements. Wood said that on 10-17-23, the parties would meet to try to come to further terms on many contingencies to be addressed.

At the 1:37:40 mark, Wood acknowledged that they haven't broached CEQA considerations yet, among many other issues.

At the 1:38:05 mark, Soldani said he had one "modification" to offer on Wood's updates, which is that of the three agreements (in the Term Sheet), the fiscal aspect is the most complicated, and that

they believe they have come to agreement on that. The SMMUSD is hoping that the next mediation will result in the parties agreeing that the City of Malibu's petition should be withdrawn.

Nov. 1, 2023, LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 13:55 mark, Dr. Deegan gave the staff update.

At the 21:40 mark, Mr. Dale Larsen (representing the SMMUSD in the trustee area petition) said the unification petition parties have made great progress, so the CVRA petition should be delayed to allow district to undertake significant public outreach about the unification petition.

At the 40:27 mark, Wood stated that the parties made substantive progress on a revenue sharing agreement, and that a JPA agreement shouldn't be difficult for the sides to achieve. The parties are hoping that in February 2024, they will be able to ratify the agreements, but that the SMMUSD needs to do significant public outreach in January 2024 about the proposed revenue sharing agreement. Wood was optimistic they can have special legislation in the 2024 legislative session to help the two sides achieve the unification.

December 6, 2023 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 1:08 mark, Dr. Deegan gave the staff update.

At the 1:10:00 mark, Wood appeared in person and was asked for an update; Wood deferred to Soldani who was online.

At the 1:11:30 mark, Soldani stated that the relevant parties did meet and continue to work through components of the revenue sharing agreement. Soldani said the parties owe the County Committee an updated timeline as the parties continue to make progress in their negotiations. Soldani clarified that the SMMUSD never threatened to withdraw from the unification process because of the work required on the trustee area petition but stated that to hold public hearings for the trustee area petition in January 2024 would delay the unification efforts in the special legislation process by a year. Soldani stated that it does not make sense to review a trustee area petition on the cusp of a unification petition, which would necessarily address trustee areas.

At the 1:14:35 mark, Wood stated that she deferred to everything Soldani had just said. Wood said the City of Malibu would not be happy if the process to get special legislation started for the unification and then was delayed by a year, stating that the City wants to move forward with the petition.

January 10, 2024 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 44:58 mark, Dr. Deegan gave the staff update.

At the 45:43 mark, Wood and Soldani appeared in person and presented their "updated aspirational timeline" for goals they had previously presented to the County Committee in a PowerPoint they referenced as the two sides' termsheet.

February (Meeting Cancelled)

March 6, 2024 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 35:44 mark, Dr. Deegan gave the staff update.

At the 37:25 mark, Wood appeared in person and was called on for an update. Soldani did not appear in person nor online.

At the 38:16 mark, Wood said they gave a presentation to the County Committee several months ago and they have concluded all discussions and negotiations around their financial agreement. Wood said they are waiting for an opportunity to share that financial agreement with the community, and they are negotiating terms of the other two agreements.

At the 47:14 mark, Wood said, "...all of the work that we've done in the last couple of years have been to avoid a review of the nine criteria." Wood said the CVRA activity had obstructed their ability to focus and make progress on the [City of Malibu's] proposed unification petition.

Staff Note:

Representatives for both the SMMUSD and the City of Malibu (Soldani and Wood) consistently requested that the County Committee consider both the petition to add trustee areas and trustee area voting (submitted by two residents) and the petition to create a Malibu USD (submitted by the City of Malibu) as linked items given the involvement of the SMMUSD in both petitions and the challenging timelines for hearings, financial details that remain unresolved, ongoing mediation, and the prospects of special legislation. In a November 29, 2023 letter from Mr. Larsen (for the SMMUSD trustee area petition submitted by two residents) Larsen stated that the district could not pursue the work needed to achieve unification during January and February of 2024 if it also had to attend to the trustee area petition, and, again linking the two petitions, Larsen requested the trustee area petition not be taken up before March 2024. At the County Committee meetings on December 6, 2023, and January 10, 2024, Mr. Shenkman, representing the trustee area petitioners, said the trustee areas petition was not linked with the petition to create a Malibu USD.

April (Meeting Cancelled)

May (Meeting Cancelled)

June 5, 2024 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 35:38 mark, Dr. Deegan paused the start of the staff update as the County Committee engaged in discussion.

At the 43:50 mark, Dr. Deegan answered questions arising from the discussion.

At the 46:24 mark, Dr. Deegan resumed the staff update.

At the 53:32 mark, Wood appeared in person and was called on for an update and Soldani attended online and spoke after Wood. Wood stated that Malibu hosted several community meetings (no dates provided) "for a total of eight." Wood stated that Malibu "had a special council meeting and a couple other community meetings, like on a Saturday, and an evening meeting, and met with all of our PTAs, and the Chamber of Commerce, and the Malibu Association of Realtors just to get feedback from the community about the terms of the Revenue Sharing Agreement." Wood said they didn't have any joint meetings, but used the same PowerPoint, including at SMMUSD's May 2024 community meeting

At the 55:30 mark, Soldani thanked the County Committee for allowing them to avoid litigating a previous version of a petition, given the willingness of both parties to negotiate. Soldani emphasized that this will be the most complicated unification that has ever been attempted in California, and that it is more complicated than the Wiseburn Unification petition. Soldani stated, "...both districts will be Basic Aid, and there are some financial complications involved." The

mediator and both parties met Tue. June 4, 2024; Soldani stated they plan to be largely completed by early Fall 2025. The parties scheduled June 18 follow-up mediation and intend to spend July working on the other two agreements: an Operational Agreement, and a JPA, targeting August 1st through 15th as when all three agreements would be shared with the community and the County Committee.

July (Meeting Cancelled)

Staff Note:

On Wednesday, April 17, 2024, some County Committee staff met with some of the parties representatives for a presentation about their tentative Revenue Sharing Agreement. The parties said there were two other agreements they were working on which may be presented to the County Committee after they receive input from community meetings and outreach. Since County Committee staff were not invited to attend any of the community meetings which the City of Malibu's representative said were being scheduled, staff visited the City of Malibu's website on May 1, 2024. The website said a community workshop would occur on May 15 at Malibu City Hall. Upon revisiting the website on May 4, it stated that the community meeting had been cancelled, and it did not mention if or when it would be rescheduled. On June 14, 2024, Soldani sent a letter with an updated timeline which was shared with the County Committee. On July 11, 2024, Wood sent a letter requesting the County Committee schedule a public hearing since the City of Malibu has discontinued negotiating with the SMMUSD. On July 17, 2024, Soldani sent a letter requesting the public hearing not occur until at least November 2024 to abide by the tentative timeline the two sides had recently agreed to during mediation. Soldani indicated that if the timeline is abandoned, the school district won't be able to continue participating in negotiations. On July 19, 2024, Wood sent a follow-up letter requesting that the County Committee not wait on the parties negotiations any longer.

August 7, 2024 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 14:18 mark, Dr. Allison Deegan gave the staff update.

At the 27:47 mark, Wood stated, "It's my understanding that as long as this committee schedules their public hearing for after November, the district will remain at the table negotiating. If the hearing is scheduled earlier than November, the district will no longer participate in mediations. So that is my understanding of the district's position as it relates to the hearing."

At the 28:42 mark, Soldani said the parties need November to finalize a viable unification package, asking the County Committee's public hearing not occur before November 2024.

September (Meeting Cancelled)

October (Meeting Cancelled)

November 6, 2024 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 32:23 mark, Wood stated, "...As for the community meetings, you will see that the City of Malibu held six community meetings in April and May of this year..."

At the 34:29 mark, Wood stated, "... since the Revenue Sharing Agreement was finished, and the other two agreements are 95% complete, the district's plan was to ratify the agreements in two meetings..."

At the 35:44 mark, Wood stated, "...by that time, the City [of Malibu] had already had several meetings to explain the agreements to the union leadership and union members at several Malibu schools..."

At the 36:10 mark, Wood stated, "... and just to be fair, we understand that the entire [Santa Monica-Malibu School] board may have questions and concerns, since they [the school board] may not feel like they have been given a full briefing on the agreements..."

At the 36:42 mark, Wood stated, "...you may recall- I'm going to show you those slides- in January 2024, our mediator, herself, actually made a presentation where she indicated that this- that the models- had been stress tested for more than 18 months during the mediation process. We also, um, we also had several contingencies within the agreements that made stress testing something that we were doing throughout the process, but there was never a time where we would necessarily need to run the model based on real numbers, cuz the real numbers would come up when separation happened. Those- that's when the real numbers would run through the model, but we tested the model each fiscal year when new numbers became available."

December (Meeting Cancelled)

January (Meeting Cancelled)

February 5, 2025 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 19:06 mark, Dr. Deegan gave the staff update.

At the 28:36 mark, Wood stated, "We don't have any substantive update; there's not been much that's happened as it relates to the petition since the last time we met. There's not been any mediation or any contact between the district and the city, officially, and we just stay in contact as the district continues to work on the agreements, but the city is not involved in that process."

At the 31:34 mark, Soldani stated, "...we are appreciative of the consideration that the committee gave to our respective communities by agreeing to extend the timeline out...", adding, "...but in that same light, I think that a February hearing is a bit dicey for the same reasons that we pushed out, that the 120-day deadline, that I think we ought to consider- we respectfully ask you consider setting the February hearing for maybe March, maybe a month before the April meeting. I hope things will be more settled by then, and logistically will be less of a burden."

April 2, 2025 LACCSDO Meeting:

At the 15:41 mark, Wood stated, "...we really appreciate all the patience you and your staff have shown us, because we do recognize this is unusual."

At the 16:24 mark, Wood stated, "So first, I'd like to be able to just say that it doesn't give me any pleasure to have to object to the staff report. The city feels like and recognizes that the County Committee staff did a great deal of work to prepare the staff report, and working with School Services, we recognize that there was a lot of time and effort that went into it."

At the 18:05 mark, Wood stated, "Admittedly, we know that we need to after separation make the future Santa Monica USD whole..."

At the 19:08 mark, Wood stated, "...we will make sure that the Santa Monica Unified will have the same per pupil revenue after separation that it had the year before separation..."

At the 27:25 mark, Wood stated, "I will continue with my second point, the idea that the staff report misstates the standards set forth in the Education Code. For Criteria One, for instance, when there's a statement about the fact that—or the belief that- we don't meet the Enrollment Criteria set forth in the Education Code. The staff report recommendation fails to recognize that the intent of the Legislature when setting that enrollment figure only establishes that as a way to keep the new district from becoming a burden at the state or county level, and there's a complete recognition that Basic Aid districts don't have to fall within that threshold."

At the 55:04 mark, Soldani stated, "...the only entities in the room here today that have school district and reorganization experience, namely, your staff, School Services of California, and the school district itself, are unanimous in their assessment that the City [of Malibu] petition fails eight of nine criteria, harms Santa Monica students, and simply doesn't work."

At the 2:09:55 mark, Ms. Brianna Garcia, Vice President of School Services of California, while presenting the independent financial analysis report, stated, "In this case, as I'll show over the next several slides, I think it is very clear that there would be a substantial negative effect on the fiscal status of the remaining Santa Monica [Unified] School District (USD). The Santa Monica USD would experience a precipitous drop in Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and would result in substantial deficit spending in order to continue to meet the needs of students. It would require some significant cuts in their budget in order to ensure they are not perpetuating and not resulting in a situation where they [Santa Monica] end up to be fiscally insolvent."

At the 2:26:23 mark, Dr. Deegan presented the County Committee Staff Feasibility Study.

Staff Note:

In October 2024, the County Committee scheduled two public hearings, one in Santa Monica on November 8 at 6:00 PM, and one in Malibu on November 13 at 6:00 PM. Two days before the first public hearing, the County Committee conducted its regular meeting on November 6, 2024, at which Wood said the City of Malibu does not want to wait for the school district to approve the three tentative agreements which the Joint Finance Committee has been working on in recent years. Wood said the City of Malibu requests that the County Committee proceed with its review process irrespective of whether negotiations resume between the City of Malibu and the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. Soldani and Mr. Jon Kean [vice president of the school district's Board of Education and a member of the Joint Finance Committee] asked that the County Committee give the school board the due diligence time its members need to review the complex agreements that would break the one school district into two new school districts. The County Committee conducted an additional public hearing on Monday, March 17, 2025, at 6:00 PM in Santa Monica to hear from additional community members, availing the opportunity again at its regular meeting on April 2, 2025, to hear from the parties, stakeholders, and members of both communities as it reviewed the nine statutory conditions required in the Education Code. The County Committee intends to make a final recommendation at its meeting at 9:30 AM on Wednesday, May 29, 2025.

Status: Petition agendized for review on May 29, 2025

Status Date: May 15, 2025

PETITION TO TRANSFER TERRITORY FROM THE GLENDALE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (USD) TO THE LA CANADA USD

On November 23, 2015, LACOE received a request for a petition pursuant to EC §35700, to transfer certain territory from the Glendale USD to the La Canada USD. The request was submitted by chief petitioners Ms. Nalini Lasiewicz, Mr. Thomas G. Smith, and Mr. Nick P. Karapetian. The petition was forwarded to County Counsel to determine its legal compliance regarding format and content. On January 13, 2016, County Counsel deemed the petition sufficient. Staff returned the petition to the chief petitioners on January 15, 2016.

On June 29, 2016, the chief petitioners submitted signed petitions for review. On June 30, 2016, staff conveyed the signed petitions to the Registrar-Recorder for signature verification. On July 18, 2016, staff received notice from the Registrar-Recorder that there were sufficient signatures to move the petition forward. Chief Petitioner Smith subsequently resigned from his role.

The petition was presented to the County Committee on September 7, 2016. The County Committee held two public hearings (October 26, 2016, in the La Canada USD, and November 2, 2016, in the Glendale USD). In mid-February, 2017, the two districts resumed negotiations in an attempt to find amicable solutions, but as of mid-April, were not able to resolve issues. A feasibility study was presented to the County Committee at the May 3, 2017 meeting, after which the Committee gave a preliminary approval to the proposal.

In the fall 2017, staff concluded the Request For Proposal (RFP) process, evaluated vendors, and selected an environmental consultant, for whom a contract was agreed upon. The environmental analysis concluded with the report's comment period spanning August 30 – September 18, 2018. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Public Hearing convened on October 3, 2018, at the County Committee's regular scheduled meeting. The County Committee continued to review the petition.

In February 2019, Dr. Kelly King, Interim Superintendent of the Glendale USD, requested a delay in the final review of the petition so that she could become familiar with the relevant issues following her recent appointment. Also in February 2019, the chief petitioners requested that the final review of the petition not take place at the April 3, 2019 meeting, because that date would fall during spring break and may impact participation by the public. In April 2019, the chief petitioners requested the June meeting date be changed due to coinciding with the school year ending, which could prevent some parents from attending the meeting.

At the October 2, 2019 regularly scheduled meeting, the County Committee voted to accept the CEQA findings, and conducted a final vote to approve the petition, but did not approve the election area, pending the review of different election area scenarios. At the November 6, 2019, regularly scheduled meeting, the County Committee further discussed election area factors and requested additional election area maps to be reviewed at the January 8, 2020 meeting.

Before the County Committee could finalize the election area at the January meeting, however, Glendale USD appealed the petition's approval to the State Board of Education (SBE), and commenced litigation about the sufficiency of the CEQA process, which halted the County Committee's process. At its May 6, 2020, regular meeting, the County Committee passed a resolution to convey the petition's administrative record to the SBE.

In September of 2022, CDE/SBE notified County Committee staff that they were reviewing this appeal and preparing for SBE review. In the latter half of December 2023, the CDE issued notification that the appeal was scheduled for January 18-19, 2024. The SBE heard the appeal on January 18, 2024, denied the appeal, and selected the transfer area as the election area. The CEQA litigation was settled and the suit dismissed on March 13, 2024. The election was held on November 5, 2024, the local measure passed, the election results were determined on December 3, 2024, and officially certified on December 17, 2024.

Status: Staff is working to effectuate the changes with both school districts and agencies at the state, county, municipal, and city levels.
Status Date: May 15, 2025

FORMATION – PROPOSAL TO CREATE A MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (USD) OUT OF TERRITORY CURRENTLY WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE SANTA MONICA-MALIBU USD

On July 23, 2015, LACOE received a request for a petition from chief petitioner Mr. Seth Jacobson, a community member who is a Malibu resident. Mr. Jacobson, along with two other chief petitioners, wants to form a separate Malibu USD from territory within the boundaries of the existing Santa Monica-Malibu USD. Prior to the submission of any signed petitions related to this request, the City of Malibu submitted its own petition to form a Malibu USD, which was discussed earlier in this update document.

Staff reviewed the request and forwarded a draft petition to County Counsel on July 27, 2015, for a legal compliance review regarding format and content. We received notification on July 30, 2015, from County Counsel informing us that the draft petition was legally acceptable. The petition was mailed to the chief petitioner on July 31, 2015, for circulation within the petition area. Staff is informed that signatures have been gathered, but not yet presented for signature verification, as the petitioners continued to negotiate with the Santa Monica-Malibu USD. A joint committee was appointed by both the district and the City of Malibu, which released a study addressing the implications of this petition. It is not clear if negotiations with this petitioner group are ongoing.

Status: Petitioners may be in negotiation.
Status Date: March 18, 2016

FORMATION - PROPOSAL TO CREATE AN ALTADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (USD) OUT OF TERRITORY CURRENTLY WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PASADENA USD

On January 17, 2006, LACOE received a request for a petition from chief petitioners Ms. Maurice Morse, Ms. Shirlee Smith, and Mr. Bruce Wasson, three community members who are residents of the area known as Altadena. The chief petitioners want to form an Altadena USD from territory within the boundaries of the Pasadena USD. The petition request was returned to the chief petitioners on January 20, 2006, because it lacked an adequate description of the area pursuant to EC §35700.3.

On February 10, 2006, LACOE received a revised request for a petition. Staff reviewed the request and forwarded a draft petition to County Counsel on February 22, 2006, for a legal compliance review regarding format and content. We received notification on March 6, 2006, from County Counsel informing us that the draft petition was legally acceptable.

On March 7, 2006, staff forwarded the draft petition to the Registrar-Recorder for verification that the description of the proposed boundaries of the Altadena USD was sufficiently clear (so registered voters residing within the proposed petition area could be identified with specificity). The Registrar-Recorder confirmed that the description was sufficient on March 10, 2006.

The petition was mailed to the chief petitioners on March 14, 2006, for circulation within the petition area. The Registrar-Recorder estimated the chief petitioners must collect approximately 7,000 valid signatures to meet the criteria set forth in EC §35700(a).

On September 23, 2010, chief petitioners delivered signed petitions to LACOE. Staff submitted the petitions to the Registrar-Recorder on September 27, 2010, for signature verification. On October 22, 2010, the Registrar-Recorder notified staff that there were insufficient valid signatures (less than the required 25 percent of the registered voters within the petition area). Staff notified the chief petitioners of the insufficiency, and at Mr. Wasson's request, returned the petitions to the Registrar-Recorder for a signature audit. Staff also advised the chief petitioner regarding the collection of additional signatures. Upon notification by the Registrar-Recorder of a sufficient number of valid signatures, staff will present the petition to the County Committee at the next regular meeting.

On January 4, 2011, staff conferred with a representative from the Registrar-Recorder's office, who informed us that no audit of petition signatures had been done yet, and they clarified the cost of signature verification. On February 15 and March 1, 2011, staff contacted the Registrar Recorder's office and were informed that the signature audit was not yet done. On May 12, 2011, staff from the Registrar Recorder's office advised LACOE that an audit of the petition's signatures was underway. On November 28, 2011, the chief petitioner, Mr. Wasson, notified LACOE of the death of one of the co-chief petitioners, Ms. Morse. Mr. Wasson stated that another chief petitioner would not be named. In August of 2014, staff confirmed that petitioner is still interested in collecting additional signatures.

Status: Petition insufficient; chief petitioners may gather additional signatures.
Status Date: December 5, 2011

FORMATION - PROPOSAL TO CREATE A MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (USD) OUT OF TERRITORY CURRENTLY WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE SANTA MONICA-MALIBU USD

Status: Petition in circulation.
Status Date: February 21, 2008

FORMATION - PROPOSAL TO CREATE A LA MIRADA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (USD) OUT OF TERRITORY CURRENTLY WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NORWALK-LA MIRADA USD

Status: Petition in circulation.
Status Date: March 20, 2007

Unification Proposals/Last Activity Date

- Inner City USD / April 2024

Transfer of Territory Proposals/Last Activity Date

- Castaic Union SD to Saugus Union SD / November 2023
- Inglewood USD to LAUSD / April 2023
- Azusa USD to Glendora USD / October 2016

Trustee Areas and/or Governing Board Size/Last Activity Date

- Acton-Agua Dulce USD / May 2025
- El Monte City SD / March 2024
- San Marino USD / April 2022
- Walnut Valley USD / May 2016

This document was prepared by staff to the County Committee.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-25.15

**AMENDED RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
ACTON-AGUA DULCE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT RECOMMENDING
THAT THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION APPROVE AND ESTABLISH TRUSTEE AREAS
FROM WHICH THE ACTON-AGUA DULCE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
TRUSTEES WILL BE ELECTED IN A BY-TRUSTEE AREA ELECTION PROCESS**

WHEREAS, the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District (“District”) Board of Education (“Board”) adopted Resolution No. 2024-25.12 to establish trustee areas beginning with the 2026 election;

WHEREAS, the Board adopted Resolution 2024-25.12 on February 27, 2025;

WHEREAS, the Board seeks to amend Resolution 2024-25.12 to clarify that the change in the method of electing members of the governing board is being made in furtherance of the purposes of the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 14025) of Division 14 of the Elections Code and the Fair Maps Act (Stats. 2023, Chapter 343, A.B. No. 764, effective January 1, 2024);

WHEREAS, the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District (“District”) currently uses an at-large system of electing members of its Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, at-large electoral systems such as the Districts are subject to challenge under the California Voting Rights Act of 2001, codified at sections 14025-14032 of the California Elections Code (“CVRA”); and

WHEREAS, by-trustee area electoral systems are not vulnerable to challenge under the CVRA; and

WHEREAS, in a by-trustee area system of election, candidates for the District’s Board of Education (the “Board”) must reside within a specific geographic subarea of the District called a “trustee area” and candidates are elected only by the voters of that trustee area; and

WHEREAS, one method of transitioning from an at-large electoral system to a by trustee area electoral system is for the school district board of education to petition the local county committee on school district organization by resolution to initiate the transition under California Education Code section 5019(c)(1); and

WHEREAS, the Fair Maps Act, Elections Code section 21130(b)(1), requires the District to determine whether it is possible to create an election district or districts in which a minority group is sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute a majority in a single-member district; and

WHEREAS, Elections Code section 21130(b)(1) requires the District to post on its redistricting website the results of the analysis within seven days of completing the analysis or prior to adopting election district boundaries, whichever occurs first; and

WHEREAS, on October 14, 2024, the District's demographers, National Demographics Corporation prepared an analysis pursuant to Elections Code section 21130(b)(1) and the District posted the report on its redistricting website; and

WHEREAS, National Demographics Corporation concluded its analysis pursuant to Elections Code section 21130(b)(1) and determined that it is not possible to create an election district or districts in which Latinos or any other minority group are a sufficiently large and geographically compact population of the Citizens of Voting Age Population (CVAP) to constitute a majority of the CVAP in one or more single-member election districts;

WHEREAS, District staff and consultants have conducted public hearings for input regarding the criteria for proposed maps as required by law, prepared proposed trustee area plans and recommendations (the "Plans") that were presented to the public at the District's Board Meetings on October 10, 2024, and October 24, 2024, and thereafter posted the Plans on the District's website for further input; and

WHEREAS, the District staff and consultants have conducted Community Forums on October 15, 2024 via Zoom to discuss the criteria for the proposed trustee area plans, and by Zoom on November 20, 2024, to discuss the proposed trustee area plans; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Elections Code section 10010, the District held properly noticed public hearings regarding the proposed trustee area plans on November 14, 2024, and December 19, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Board has considered all public input and comment on the trustee area plans; and

WHEREAS, the Board has adopted Map 105 and hereby recommends Map 105 to the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization ("County Committee") for its consideration based upon the findings, analysis and recommendations contained in the report attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit "A"; and

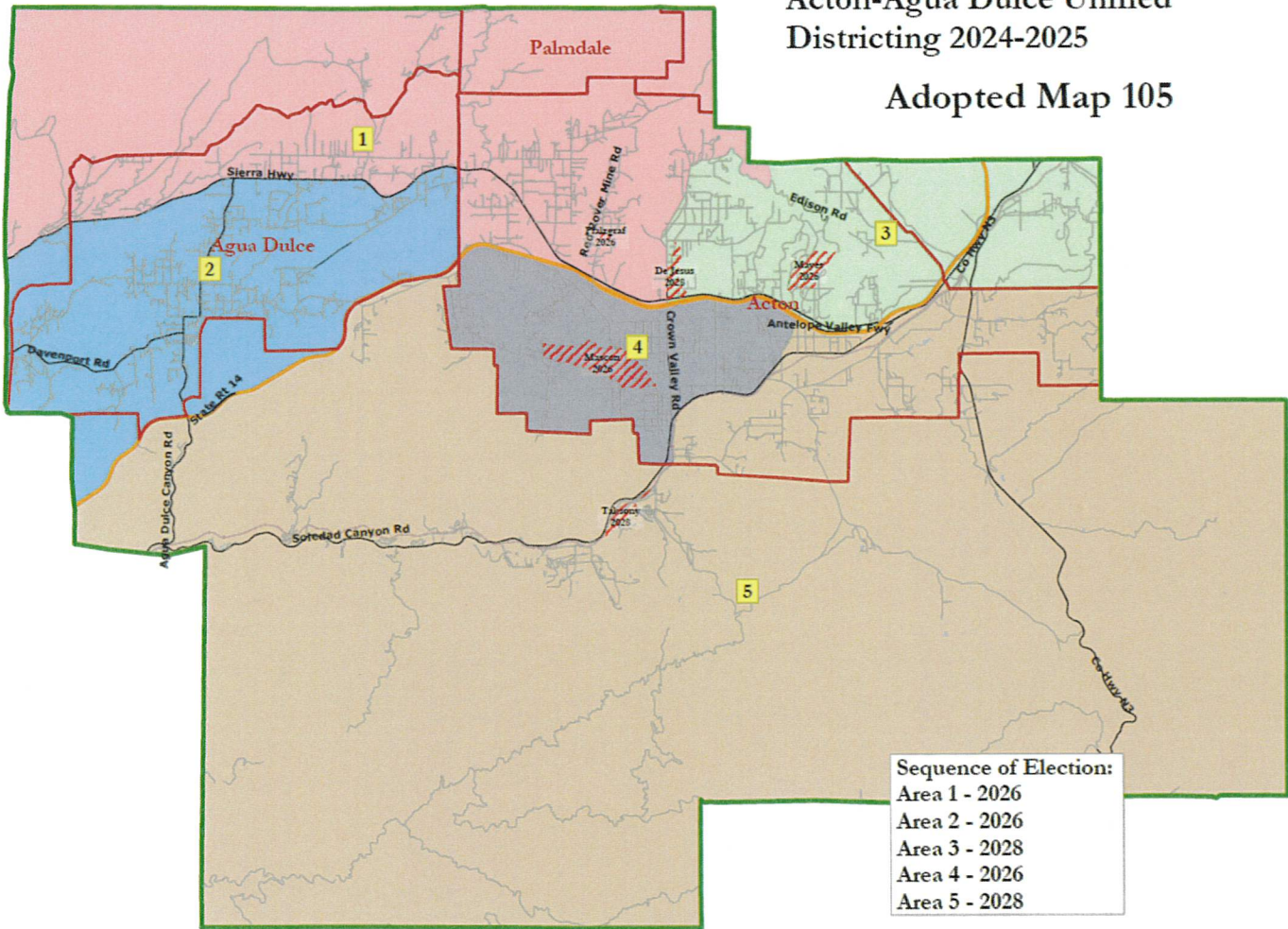
WHEREAS, the Board also seeks a waiver of an election required by Education Code section 5020 from the County Committee;

WHEREAS, the Board declares that after due diligence, public hearings, community forums, and outreach over the internet, the Board has complied with the intent of the California Voting Rights Act ("CVRA") and thus requesting that the County Committee grant the waiver of the election pursuant to Education Code section 5020 is in keeping with the intent of the CVRA and in furtherance of the purposes of the CVRA and Fair Maps Act.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of Education of the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District as follows:

Acton-Agua Dulce Unified
Districting 2024-2025

Adopted Map 105

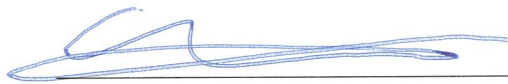


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Adopted Map 105							
District		1	2	3	4	5	Total
	Total Pop	2,562	2,556	2,355	2,395	2,397	12,265
	Deviation from Ideal	109	103	-98	-68	-55	207
	% Deviation	4.44%	4.20%	-4.03%	-2.86%	-2.28%	0.44%
Total Pop	% Hisp	32.5%	22%	28%	27%	28%	28%
	% NH White	58%	70%	62%	65%	62%	64%
	% NH Black	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%
	% Asian-American	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Citizen Voting Age Pop	Total	1,669	2,002	1,589	1,669	1,900	9,027
	% Hisp	29%	19%	27%	25%	21%	24%
	% NH White	61%	76%	70%	73%	70%	70%
	% NH Black	1%	1%	1%	2%	7%	2%
	% Asian-Pacific	9%	4%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Voter Registration (Nov 2022)	Total	1,686	1,834	1,736	1,702	1,673	8,541
	% Latino est.	21%	18%	23%	21%	19%	20%
	% Spanish-Surnamed	19%	16%	21%	19%	17%	18%
	% Asian-Surnamed	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	% Filipino-Surnamed	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
	% NH White est.	76%	78%	72%	75%	71%	74%
	% NH Black	0%	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%
Voter Turnout (Nov 2022)	Total	1,004	1,105	993	977	905	4,986
	% Latino est.	14%	12%	16%	15%	13%	14%
	% Spanish-Surnamed	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	% Asian-Surnamed	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	% Filipino-Surnamed	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	% NH White est.	82%	84%	78%	81%	77%	81%
	% NH Black	0%	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%
Voter Turnout (Nov 2020)	Total	1,387	1,555	1,489	1,457	1,280	7,178
	% Latino est.	17%	13%	19%	15%	14%	16%
	% Spanish-Surnamed	21%	15%	23%	20%	19%	19%
	% Asian-Surnamed	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
	% Filipino-Surnamed	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%
	% NH White est.	81%	83%	75%	80%	75%	79%
	% NH Black est.	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
ACS Pop. Est.	Total	2,345	2,593	2,053	2,551	2,389	11,840
Age	age0-19	19%	17%	20%	22%	18%	19%
	age20-60	45%	47%	47%	49%	50%	48%
	age60-plus	36%	36%	33%	29%	33%	33%
Immigration	immigrants	15%	17%	11%	10%	11%	13%
	naturalized	62%	59%	72%	47%	48%	58%
Language spoken at home	english	75%	74%	80%	74%	82%	77%
	spanish	20%	18%	16%	24%	15%	19%
	asian-lang	3%	5%	4%	1%	2%	3%
	other lang	3%	4%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Language Fluency	Spanish Eng. "Less than Very Well"	9%	9%	6%	8%	4%	7%
Education (among those age 25+)	hs-grad	65%	64%	55%	63%	68%	65%
	bachelor	17%	13%	22%	21%	17%	18%
	graduatedegree	8%	14%	5%	8%	8%	9%
Child in Household	child-under18	23%	21%	25%	27%	23%	24%
Pct of Pop. Age 15+	employed	56%	55%	57%	60%	51%	56%
Household Income	income 0-25k	10%	11%	9%	13%	18%	12%
	income 25-50k	11%	10%	6%	15%	13%	11%
	income 50-75k	8%	4%	10%	7%	11%	8%
	income 75-200k	52%	51%	54%	41%	32%	45%
	income 200k-plus	18%	24%	20%	24%	26%	22%
Housing Stats	single-family	93%	100%	98%	100%	100%	99%
	multi-family	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
	rented	6%	8%	9%	10%	11%	9%
	owned	94%	92%	91%	90%	89%	91%
Total population data from the 2020 California Adjustment to the Decennial Census							
Surname-based Voter Registration and Turnout data from the California Statewide Database							
Latino voter registration and turnout data are Spanish-surname counts adjusted using Census Population Department undercount estimates. NH White and NH Black registration and turnout counts estimated by HCD. Citizen Voting Age Pop., Age, Immigration, and other demographic data from the 2010-2022 American Community Survey and Special Tabulation by-year data.							

1. That the above recitals are true and correct.
2. That the Board has adopted Map 105 and recommends Map 105 to the County Committee for consideration and adoption and waiver of the election requirement set forth in Education Code section 5020.
3. That the Board has acted with due diligence and conducted public hearings, community forums, and outreach over the internet in compliance with the intent of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) and the Board is requesting that the County Committee grant the school district a waiver of the election pursuant to Education Code section 5020 in keeping with the intent of the CVRA and in furtherance of the purposes of the CVRA and Fair Maps Act.
4. That the District Superintendent and/or their designee take all actions necessary to notify the County Committee of the Board's determination forthwith and provide whatever assistance may be required by the County Committee to complete the process.

ADOPTED, SIGNED AND APPROVED this 8 day of May, 2025.



Lester Mascon

President of the Board of Education for the
Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District

Brianne Taksony VP

I, ~~Jorge De Jesus~~, Clerk of the Board of Education of the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Board of Education of said District at a meeting of said Board held on the 8 day of May, 2025 and that it was so adopted by the following vote:

AYES: 3

NOES: 0

ABSTAIN: 0 Mr. Pfaltzgraf

ABSENT: 0 Dr. De Jesus

B. Taksony

VP Jorge De Jesus

Brianne Taksony
Clerk of the Board of Education for the
Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District

ELECTION CODE SECTION 21130 REPORT

ACTON-AGUA DULCE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

JUSTIN LEVITT AND RONALD D. WENKART

The Los Angeles County Office of Education has requested the following report on behalf of the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization:

- 1. Does the map adopted by the governing board of the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District equalize the populations among the trustee areas to the extent possible?**

The courts have held that a 10% population variance among trustee areas is permissible under the Federal Voting Rights Act. Map 105 adopted by the Board of Education on February 27, 2025, has a total population variance of 8.44%.

- 2. Does Map 105 adopted by the Board comply with the United States and California Constitutions and the federal Voting Rights Act?**

Yes. Map 105 does not discriminate against any protected class, creates trustee areas that are nearly equal in population, does not engage in racial or ethnic gerrymandering, creates trustee areas that offer protected class populations the opportunity to elect their preferred candidates as much as possible, creates geographically contiguous and compact trustee areas, respects communities of interest, avoids the division of cities and census designated places, and uses major roads and natural barriers to draw the boundaries of the trustee areas.

- 3. Did the Board try to create a majority-minority trustee area?**

Yes. The demographers determined that the creation of a majority-minority trustee area was not possible. The CVAP Hispanic population is approximately 24% in the District and the Hispanic/Latino population is spread out throughout the District making it impossible to create a CVAP Hispanic/Latino majority trustee area. There is insufficient Asian, Black, or Native American population to create a majority trustee area.

- 4. Is the map contiguous?**

Yes. Each Trustee Area is geographically contiguous. A technical inspection of each Trustee Area demonstrates that each Trustee Area is a single, continuous area, composed of whole Census Blocks, where all parts of the area are connected. There are no areas connected only at a single point. The District contains no islands or areas not connected to the main portion of the District.

- 5. Does the map adopted by the Board respect Communities of Interest?**

Yes. Specific communities of interest were identified, including the Vista Ladera homeowners' association and the Soledad Canyon/Angeles National Forest area. Map 105 keeps each community together in a single Trustee Area. In addition, in Agua Dulce, the map

breaks with the arbitrary Census-Designated Place (CDP) boundary to include areas considered to be part of Agua Dulce by residents and that are only accessible via the CDP.

6. Does the map adopted by the Board respect city boundaries and census designated places?

Yes. There are two Census-Designated Places (CDP) in the District, along with an unpopulated portion of the City of Palmdale. Acton, the larger of the two, must be divided into four trustee areas and Map 105 does that. Agua Dulce must be divided into two trustee areas, and Map 105 does that as well. The portion of Palmdale is unpopulated, but maintained whole in a single trustee area. Other areas not within any CDP or city are assigned as appropriate to contiguous areas.

7. Is the map adopted by the Board geographically compact?

Yes. A visual review of Map 105 will show that each of the trustee areas is geographically compact. Map 105 does not connect geographically distant communities in one trustee area, does not bypass any group of population in favor of more distant populations, and keeps neighboring communities together, as much as possible while using whole Census Blocks.

8. Does the map adopted by the Board favor or discriminate against any incumbent, candidate or political party?

No. Map 105 does not favor or discriminate against any incumbent, candidate, or political party. Maps were drawn without consideration of incumbent locations. In Map 105, two incumbents have been placed in Trustee Area 3. Trustee Area 2 is vacant and is scheduled to hold an election in November 2026.

A judge said this California city's elections diluted Latino votes. Six years later, nothing's changed

CALMatters, SAMEEA KAMAL – 04.01.25

It's been six years since a judge ruled that Santa Monica's election system discriminates against Latino voters. In that time, there have been at least three more elections — but the city hasn't had to change the way it runs them.

That's because the coastal Los Angeles County city appealed, and under current law, it's not required to change the process until after all appeals are heard.

Under current law, cities whose at-large election systems are found by courts to have discriminated against voters don't have to change them if they appeal the decision.

Assemblymember [Anamarie Avila Farias](#) thinks that needs to change.

“Even after the court determined an at-large election system is unlawful and radically discriminatory, the local body can hold even more elections utilizing their unlawful system by filing an appeal and paying attorneys to delay this process, during which time justice for communities of color is delayed and voters are disenfranchised,” the Democrat from Concord said [at an Assembly Judiciary Committee hearing last week](#).

Under “at-large” election systems like Santa Monica's, everyone who lives in a city votes on the same set of candidates. In a district-based election system, a city is divided into districts and voters choose from candidates vying to represent just their neighborhood.

[Avila Farias' proposal](#) would mean courts would no longer automatically keep the current election process in place during the appeals process in cases related to the state's voting rights act.

Sylvia Shaw, a lobbyist representing Santa Monica, said the proposal could force cities to repeatedly change their election systems as courts weigh the final outcome of a case.

That could include booting elected officials off the council, or forcing those who want to run to quickly raise money. Shaw said that could deprive voters of having anyone representing them for some period, and would be costly and confusing.

“It would result in an expensive and potentially temporary overhaul of a voting system that could leave minority voters in the city worse off than under the at-large system,” she told the committee.

Maria Loya, a former city council candidate who is [a plaintiff in the 2016 case against Santa Monica](#), said the city continues to use taxpayer dollars to fight it.

“We’re trying to ensure that there’s a permanent representative from our neighborhood, and to ensure that candidates of color — in particular, Mexican Americans and Latinos — are able to not only run, but have an ability to win elected office,” Loya said.

Kevin Shenkman, an attorney who has fought dozens of cases to force more jurisdictions to switch from at-large to district-based voting, said the issue is not unique to Santa Monica, which is why a change in the law is necessary.

He’s trying a similar case against Huntington Beach in August that he expects will be resolved in favor of the plaintiffs, who argue that as in Santa Monica, the city’s at-large elections dilute Latino residents’ vote and prevent them from being able to elect a candidate of their choice. He thinks that the city will appeal as many times as it can.

“The Latino voters in Huntington Beach shouldn’t have to wait for their voting rights while the city of Huntington Beach appeals and appeals and appeals to cling to their power,” he said.

That’s why the legislation is not just about Santa Monica’s 92,000 voters, he said, but about all 39 million California voters.

Santa Monica Daily Press – By Matthew Hall – April 3, 2025

Malibu's request for local school district is rejected by County officials

County officials denied Malibu's request for its own school district on Wednesday during a vote that was as convoluted, delayed, accusatory and frustrating as the petition process itself.

The nailbitingly close 6-5 vote doesn't actually end the dream for the City of Malibu as the final decision will be made by State regulators at a later date but the County decision will be given to the State alongside the staff reports and studies generated in the years long process.

Wednesday's decision was the result of a decade-long process that began when the City of Malibu submitted a petition through a 2015 resolution to form its own school district separate from Santa Monica.

If approved, the reorganization would create two independent school districts: Malibu Unified and Santa Monica Unified, replacing the current combined district structure that has existed for decades.

Supporters of the split argue that separation would allow each community to govern its schools according to local needs and priorities.

Opposition has centered around financial concerns, with questions about how resources, funding, and assets would be divided between the two proposed districts.

The road to Tuesday's vote has been marked by sporadic negotiations between the city of Malibu and the school district to come to a voluntary agreement splitting the district and its assets.

The parties engaged in extensive mediation sessions attempting to forge agreements on revenue sharing, operations, and other critical aspects of the potential separation.

While tentative agreements were reached, and in some cases made public, they were never formally signed.

Instead the two sides broke off negotiations, with each blaming the other, and the long-gestating county process was rekindled to rule on Malibu's petition for independence.

The County had nine criteria on which to base its decision and the staff report released before the meeting said Malibu could not meet eight of those nine.

Malibu's supporters, including five of the 11 individuals on the Committee, rejected that analysis.

They said financial critiques of the deal were faulty because they did not project revenues out far enough, failed to account for steady funding from property tax revenues and improperly classified Santa Monica as being harmed by the loss of Malibu. They also said Malibu was a distinct community that deserved its own schools regardless of the history of a joint district.

Committee Member Charles Davis led the charge in favor of Malibu levying heavy criticism at the County report including the conclusion that a Malibu district would penalize students of color by centralizing them in the remaining Santa Monica district.

He said Santa Monica students would not suffer financially because Malibu would make some kind of payment to maintain services.

"I hate to get into this debate, but we keep talking about 'underfunded.' Nobody has really ran those numbers. I ran them and they will not be underfunded. Somebody put that out there. Take it in consideration the \$10 or \$12 or \$15 million that they want to put into, and we're making it a racial issue when it's not a racial issue. And I'm Black, and as you all can see, and I understand racism, okay, fully. Well, this is not a racial issue. It's a power issue about money."

Committee Member Donald LaPlante was also in favor of a Malibu District.

“There needs to be a Santa Monica district. There needs to be a Malibu district,” he said.

“The two entities need to get back together. If I could, I'd lock them in the conference room back here and block the door until they came out with an agreement. Apparently, a meeting on April 23, I hope for four votes in the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School district to ratify, approve, whatever that agreement, sort of was six months ago. Everybody can get back on the railroad train and get it moving towards Sacramento, get it on the state board agenda, and to get back to the legislation approved so that there can be a Santa Monica Unified School District and a Malibu Unified School District.”

Estefany Castaneda was among the majority critical of the Malibu plan. She said Malibu had not shown it would be fiscally responsible in the long term and that promises made regarding potential enrollment growth in the future were unrealistic.

“I'd like to say that the petition, of course, fails eight of the nine legal criteria, and there's no binding plan to divide property or revenue, no finalized tax agreement and no clear operational transition, leaves too many critical questions unanswered about who pays for what is responsible for debt, and how continuity for students and staffs will be insured. Santa Monica would lose a substantial portion of its property tax base while continuing to serve the vast majority of low income students, English learners and students with special needs in the district. That's not just bad planning, it's inequitable,” she said.

Santa Monica resident and former SMMUSD member Ralph Mechur, who is also part of the committee alongside current Councilman Barry Snell, made the motion to reject Malibu's petition.

“The proposals to form Unified School Districts or requested change of boundaries are to only be undertaken based on evidence of compelling reasons to make such changes related to objective barriers to students educational achievement guided by the mandated nine conditions of review,” he said.

“I don’t feel that the proposal before us meets those, meets that standard.”

The debate over the issues was itself winding but the final vote itself was emblematic of the chaotic petition process so far. Mechur’s motion was actually a substitute for an original motion first made by Davis.

Davis argued that Mechur’s motion required additional action by the board before it could be heard and while he was overruled on that point, he continued to question the Committee’s handling of the vote.

When the vote was eventually taken, several committee members failed to understand the established voting procedure.

While members were cross talking on their microphones and preparing to revote on the issue a second time, a representative of the Office of County Council broke into the meeting to explain the Committee’s rules to them and clarify that their vote to deny the petition was final.

If Malibu appeals the County decision, it will go before the State Board of Education although the timeline for that is uncertain with past proposals taking years to reach their conclusion.

County Committee to Vote Again on Malibu Split

By Jorge Casuso

April 8, 2025 -- A County committee's vote last week denying Malibu's split from the School District will need to be taken again, District officials confirmed Monday.

"We have been made aware of the County Committee's plan to take a new vote on May 7," said District spokesperson Gail Pinsker. "We are disappointed in this decision to not uphold the vote."

The decision by the LA County Office of Education's (LACOE) Committee on School District Organization comes after the parliamentary procedures used to guide last Wednesday's 6 to 5 vote were mired in confusion.

The controversy centered on a substitute motion made by Committee member Ralph Mechur, a former member of the School Board, to deny Malibu's petition.

The maker of the original motion to approve the petition, Committee member Charles Davis, repeatedly argued that the Committee needed to first vote on whether to take up the substitute motion.

"I am thoroughly confused. You are going to take a vote on a substitute motion?" Davis said before the vote. "How can you do that when you have a primary motion?"

"The only thing you can do on a substitute motion is consider do you want to take that. Do a vote to consider taking a substitute motion."

Board Chair Suzan Solomon decided to follow the advice of Committee member Donald LaPlante, who had served "for many, many years" as parliamentarian for the California School Board Association, and vote on Mechur's substitute motion.

"I'm taking his word," Solomon said, noting that LaPlante had been both a School Board member and City Councilman and that she would "rely on his experience."

After further efforts to explain the procedure led to more confusion, a representative from the office of the County Counsel stepped in.

"Davis brought forth a motion with a second, then a substitute motion was made by Mechur," Counsel said. "There was a second on that motion, and that motion was then voted on.

"Had that motion failed, then the original motion would have been considered. That motion passed. Is that correct?" Several committee members said yes.

"Accordingly there is no need to reconsider the original motion because the substitute motion superceded the original motion under Robert's Rules of Order," the Counsel said.

Mechur noted after the meeting that the Santa Monica City Council and School District follow that same procedure.

He said that regardless of the outcome of the upcoming vote, the issue will in all likelihood go before the State Board of Education (SBE) ("*Malibu Fails to Meet Criteria for District Split, Study Finds,*" April 1, 2025).

If the Committee supports Malibu's petition, "it goes to the state board," Mechur said. "If denied, it can be appealed to the state board."

LACOE did not return a call for comment on the reason for its Committee's decision to take a new vote.

Oakland neighborhoods are grouped into five voting ‘clusters.’ Which one are you in?

San Francisco Chronicle – April 11, 2025- Aseem Shukla, Sarah Ravani and Harsha Devulapalli

[Academic study of large California city’s voting patterns considering many factors, including race.]

Oaklanders voiced their displeasure with embattled former Mayor Sheng Thao by ousting her in a historic recall last fall. On Tuesday, they must come together to pick her successor.

Nine candidates are running to replace Thao, who has since been indicted on federal bribery charges and has pleaded not guilty, and finish out the remaining 18 months of her term. Former Rep. Barbara Lee and Oakland City Council Member Loren Taylor are the apparent front-runners. Both have promised to tackle the city’s most vexing problems, which include a massive budget deficit, eviscerated social services and high (if falling) crime.

The city’s unions, building trades and most of the current council members have backed Lee, whereas Taylor has gathered support from residents who supported the recalls of Thao and former Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price.

The race lays bare the divisions in one of the most ethnically, economically and politically diverse cities in the Bay Area. And as a new Chronicle analysis shows, that variation can’t be reduced just to poor vs. rich, uphill vs. downhill, Black vs. white or even progressive vs. moderate.

As we did ahead of the San Francisco mayoral election last fall, the Chronicle examined nine years of precinct-level election results in Oakland to see which parts of the city most consistently voted together. That included more than 230 decisions at the ballot box for public offices as well as city-, county- and statewide propositions from June 2016 to November 2024.

As in the San Francisco analysis, the Oakland results suggest the city most cleanly falls into five distinct voting groups, based purely on a clustering algorithm’s

assessment of past electoral behavior (we considered dividing the city into other numbers of groups, but none captured Oakland's politics as well).

But in contrast to mostly well-off San Francisco, the Oakland groups were measurably more distinct in their voting habits, as well as more geographically contiguous.

They also mapped clearly to the city's ethnic and income divides.

"Where you live is how you vote," said Justin Berton, a veteran Oakland-based political communications consultant.

Voters in Oakland's hundred-odd precincts have weighed in on dozens of issues since 2016. We trained a clustering algorithm to see which parts of the city tend to vote together.

Of course, beyond their preferences, not all parts of the city pull their weight in the same way. In the 2022 mayoral election, turnout was higher farther uphill and lower in the city's bayfront neighborhoods, as is typical.

But the city's divides are much more subtle than just "engaged hills" vs. "apathetic flats." For example, the algorithm found that Oakland has a distinctly Progressive West spanning from Uptown to the border with Berkeley and Emeryville, where a large population of left-leaning renters resides.

That progressive group has often stood in political contrast to East Oakland, a poorer and more socially conservative corner of the city.

Between them lies the Melting Pot of central Oakland, which has the city's most diverse and immigrant-heavy population, and at times a populist voting streak.

Uphill from these neighborhoods, as well as by Jack London Square, is a group of neighborhoods that could be called the Liberal Slope, where well-off residents support liberal policies.

Finally, there are the Hills, Oakland's whitest, wealthiest and most economically conservative enclaves.

The Progressive West

From the warehouses-turned-studios of West Oakland, to the theaters and boutiques of Uptown, to the restaurants and bars of Temescal, something beyond sheer hipness unites this collection of neighborhoods: their progressive bona fides.

More than any other part of the city, this group distinguishes itself by its support of tenant rights. Voters here consistently support measures to defend or expand rent control, restrict just-cause eviction, and tax homeowners to support parks and homeless services.

Small wonder: Fully three-quarters of residents here are renters. They also have some other distinctly urban characteristics: They live in relatively small households, have the fewest children and are least likely to commute by car.

Social justice also matters here, as in last fall's Proposition 6, which would have banned unpaid labor in the state prison system, and which this cluster's voters supported to an outsize degree.

This was also the only group to vote against the recalls of Thao and Price, and it's partly represented on the City Council by Carroll Fife, an activist who helped start Moms 4 Housing, which earned national coverage when members occupied a vacant house for two months to fight for housing as a human right. Fife also won reelection last year against a moderate opponent.

Likewise, it was one of moderate former Mayor Libby Schaaf's weakest areas.

"When we'd go to West Oakland, there was a progressive conversation about whether policing is necessary at all," said Berton, who managed communications for Schaaf at the time of the George Floyd protests in 2020. "These kinds of voters were upset with her about being 'pro-police.'"

East Oakland

If the Progressive West is the city's most left-leaning place, East Oakland is among its most right-leaning — at least on social and public safety issues.

At 50% Latino and 30% Black, the city's southernmost and easternmost neighborhoods are overwhelmingly Democratic.

But social scientists have shown that both Black and Latino Democrats often hold substantially more conservative views on family, morality and sexuality than their white counterparts, and that's no different here.

Voters in East Oakland most distinguished themselves from other parts of the city by supporting 2016's statewide Proposition 60, which would have mandated that actors in adult films wear condoms; opposing Oakland's 2016 soda tax; and opposing both an affirmation of same-sex marriage in the California Constitution and new gender-neutral language in Oakland's charter by greater margins than the rest of the city last fall.

East Oakland is the poorest, least college-educated and among the most violent parts of the city, and its politics reflect that.

"In times of crisis, people will always lean to the right, because at the end of the day, when people don't feel safe, you are going to default to the devil that you know," said John Jones III, director of programs at the nonprofit Urban Strategies Council and third-generation East Oaklander, referring to police. This part of the city is particularly exposed to crime — especially gang violence.

"When we'd go to East Oakland, it was surprising," said Berton, the former Schaaf spokesman. "The elders would be like, we need more police. We need to lock them up. It was just the No. 1 issue over and over again. This was even post-George Floyd."

How those preferences will shake out next week is unclear. Voters in this group show up with disproportionate loyalty for establishment politicians, and both major candidates have a long history in East Oakland. Taylor previously represented parts of East Oakland when he was on City Council, and Lee spent decades representing Oakland in Congress.

The Melting Pot

Between the lefty north and west and the more conservative eastern and southern flanks of the city lies the most populous and diverse group of Oakland precincts, stretching from West Oakland through downtown, Chinatown and on to Fruitvale.

This group of precincts lies in the city's middle — not just geographically and demographically, but also politically.

In aggregate, it differs from the city's politics by less than any other area, and serves as a bellwether for the rest of the city's vote.

That's not to say there's nothing unique about the voters in what we're referring to as the Melting Pot. This region has the city's largest share of immigrants, Asian voters and residents who speak a language other than English at home. It's also the second-poorest and second-least college-educated.

That diversity can make campaigning here tough, and turnout tends to lag.

Stewart Chen, a chiropractor and president of the Chinatown Business Improvement District, said Chinatown is typically the "first stop" for immigrants from China, the Philippines, Taiwan and other countries.

"Chinatown residents as voters tend to be either independent or more center-leaning Democrats," Chen said.

Each ethnolinguistic group can have its own interests. But when the vote here does stand out, it's often because residents reject the establishment.

Voters here supported politicians like Mayor Libby Schaaf, Sen. Adam Schiff, and even then-Senate candidate Kamala Harris by smaller margins than the rest of the city.

Chen said Chinatown voters are temperamentally skeptical. "The immigrant population tends to have a distrust for the government. They don't trust the police, they are not as party loyal," Chen said. "They are more loyal to the issues that candidates tend to focus on."

Likewise, Chris Iglesias, CEO of the Unity Council, a nonprofit based in Fruitvale, said most of the Latino community in his neighborhood votes on specific concerns.

Iglesias said residents are drawn to "candidates that support businesses and candidates that support the sanctuary laws."

Sometimes, those perceived interests can be at odds. Like many immigrant-heavy communities nationwide, this area also swung disproportionately toward Donald Trump in 2024.

The Liberal Slope

Oakland has yuppies too. In places ranging from the upscale condos of Jack London Square to the tidy single-family homes of Rockridge, Dimond Heights and

Lakeshore is a collection of voters significantly whiter, wealthier, more professional and more likely to own their home than the rest of the city.

Their politics reflect the idealism of that particular class of prosperous liberals.

“They’re the neighborhoods of progressive good government,” said Jim Ross, a principal at Telegraph PR, a political communications firm with a long history in the East Bay.

If East Oakland was the cluster most skeptical of initiatives like the soda tax, gay marriage and the state’s plastic bag ban, the area we call the Liberal Slope was the most supportive.

And more than the other groups mentioned above, this one throws its weight around. While as few as 25% of registered voters participate in non-presidential years in places like East Oakland, turnout here routinely exceeds 60%. For that reason, voters here are highly coveted — and can be decisive.

“Not only is it really dense, but it's really politically active,” said Ross. “So if you want to know who's going to win the mayor's race, you can walk through that district and see how many Loren Taylor and Barbara Lee signs are up.”

The Hills

The least populous and dense part of the city is known as the hills, sloping grandly above the rest of the city and dotted with oaks, redwoods, cypresses — and the city’s wealthiest residents.

This area of older, whiter, more home-owning voters may be small, but it’s mighty. Turnout here routinely exceeds 70%. In the 2020 presidential election, it exceeded 90%.

In a place like Oakland, even wealthy white homeowners tend to be liberal Democrats. But the flavor of that liberalism differs markedly from downslope.

Voters here are a world away from the working-class neighborhoods of East and Central Oakland, but arguably, they’re more politically at odds with the progressives of West and North Oakland.

While voters in those more progressive neighborhoods — largely renters — support pro-tenant policies, homeowners in the hills strenuously oppose them.

Likewise, voters here reliably support the area's most moderate politicians, like Schaaf (who represented the hills on the council before leading the city), former Alameda County DA Nancy O'Malley and Taylor in his 2022 run for mayor.

Voters here also matter because of their resources. "That's where (candidates are) doing their fundraisers, developing their donor base, developing their get-out-the-vote," said Berton.

How we created the clusters

To build the clusters, the Chronicle looked at how each of the city's 103 precincts have voted in every election since June 2016. That includes primary, general and special elections — for any race that all Oaklanders could participate in. We then trained a clustering algorithm to find which precincts vote most alike.

It's important to note that precincts aren't people: every precinct is diverse both demographically and politically. We don't know how individual people voted, so we're forced to look at aggregates.

That means that the preferences of smaller groups living close together get obscured.

For example, some West Oakland precincts are heterogeneous mixes of longer-standing Black voters and more demographically diverse newer residents.

It also means that some meaningful differences get captured imperfectly.

For example, the city's southeast corner — the neighborhoods surrounding the Oakland Zoo — are particularly demographically mixed and had voting habits that the clustering algorithm didn't consistently categorize with one group. Some versions of the algorithm grouped these precincts with the Hills, others with the Liberal Slope, and still others with East Oakland.

Still, most precincts consistently show patterns across elections that align with one particular group, proving an important point: The city is much more complex than just the hills vs. the rest.

What this means for the mayor's race

Each cluster will matter in deciding the mayoral election — perhaps in ways that are hard to predict. "Candidates and ballot measures move differently," said Ross.

“Candidates tend to be more identity based. Ballot measures are more values based.”

In other words, voters in heavily Black or heavily Asian areas historically tended to support Black or Asian candidates respectively. That’s especially true of more obscure races, like lower-level city offices or judgeships.

That support may not always align with what candidates stand for.

For example, in 2022 Sheng Thao did relatively well in the Asian-heavy Melting Pot cluster, despite advocating progressive policies to the left of what many voters there supported.

This time around, both major candidates are Black, a first in city history.

That may mean that allegiances in places like East Oakland and the Melting Pot are more divided than usual. On the one hand, both candidates have strong local ties. On the other, each candidate has potential liabilities: Lee is a strident social progressive, while Taylor has been an economic moderate.

That may also mean that other parts of the city have outsized importance.

In both Berton’s and Ross’ assessment, the Liberal Slope is where the election is contested, not least because it has enthusiastically supported both Taylor and Lee in different races in the past. Lee, a progressive icon and respected lawmaker, might speak to these voters’ progressive commitments — but Taylor might appeal to their desire for more prudent government.

“This is the swing group,” said Ross. “Elections are won or lost in Oakland above the 580 and just below the Mormon temple.”

Both Ross and Berton said the importance of this group is less because of its numerical strength than the reliability of its turnout. That implies that attending to more upscale voters pays larger dividends.

And given the coalitions each candidate seems to be building — a progressive and traditional-Democrat alliance for Lee, versus a more moderate and technocratic one for Taylor — that suggests each candidate needs a different strategy.

“Lee’s issue is kind of twofold. One is she needs to persuade the (Liberal Slope), and then she needs to drive turnout amongst the other clusters,” said Ross.

“Loren Taylor basically just needs to persuade the (Liberal Slope), because the hills folks will turn out for him.”

Methodology [to] explore how differently the clusters vote

The Chronicle’s analysis relies on precinct-level election results from the Alameda County Registrar of Voters and demographic data from the Census Bureau.

Election results for races in which all city voters were eligible to take part from 2016 to 2024 were compiled for every precinct. That list of races includes citywide, regional, statewide and national elections, but excludes races for offices like City Council or State Assembly, whose districts cover only part of the city. It also excludes U.S. presidential primaries, which separate voters by partisan affiliation.

The analysis took into account every proposition or candidate that earned, on average, at least 2% or at most 98% of the vote across precincts. Candidates or positions earning negligible or lopsided support do not add meaningful information to the analysis.

Because precinct boundaries change over time, precinct results from past elections were recalculated to match present boundaries based on the voting-age population overlap between past and current precincts.

Precincts were categorized using different iterations of a k-means clustering algorithm. We ran various iterations of the analysis to check that small changes to our methods did not lead to large differences in the results:

* We ran iterations checking Oakland’s current precinct boundaries vs. the boundaries in force as of March 2020. There are currently only 103 precincts, so the 239 precincts used in March 2020 allow for a more fine-grained analysis.

* We ran iterations examining all the available elections versus a reduced set of “components.” Since many results are highly correlated from election to election across precincts, we attempted “dimensionality reduction” using a method called principal component analysis to condense individual results to six “components” that represent the most important ways that precincts have aligned together in past city votes.

Across each of the possible combinations, we consistently found that five clusters captured the variation across the city while also yielding groups that were easy to describe. Ultimately, we decided on the variant that clustered on current precinct boundaries and without the dimensionality reduction, in large part because this result was relatively easy to interpret.

We used U.S. census data to characterize the groups we obtained.

The racial and ethnic makeup of each precinct comes from the 2020 census. Our analysis grouped residents into mutually exclusive racial and ethnic categories, which is an oversimplification that doesn't always match how people identify.

Anyone who identifies as Hispanic or Latino is counted in that group, regardless of race.

White, Black, and Asian American and Pacific Islander categories represent non-Hispanic adult residents who reported being of only those single races.

Members of other ethnic groups and those of mixed ancestry form much smaller groups; their shares were not shown.

All other demographic data came from the Census Bureau's 2018 to 2022 American Community Survey, which we obtained at the level of the census tract, the smallest geography for which most of this information is available.

Since these geographies are not identical to voting precincts, we inferred the demographics of the precincts by calculating the adult population overlap between the two geographies.

Credits

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Voice of OC – Angelina Hicks – April 15, 2025

Environmental Groups Raise Concerns Over OC School District Property Lease Near Banning Ranch

The proposed lease of an 11.36-acre site in Newport Beach is gaining the attention of local environmental groups, who are claiming an Orange County school district violated state law during the search for developers.

The Newport-Mesa Unified School District put out a call for bidders in January, looking for a group to enter a long-term ground lease to develop the site — a move district officials say is allowed under state law.

The property is surrounded on three sides by the nearly 400-acre Randall Preserve, formerly known as Banning Ranch, which was acquired by a set of environmental groups in 2022 to preserve the open space.

The school district's bid for proposals mentions creating workforce housing for district employees, but proposals do not have to be exclusively for that use.

None of the Newport-Mesa school board members replied to requests for comment for this story.

The 11.36-acre property is currently owned by the Newport-Mesa Unified School District and is slated to be leased to a developer. The land is surrounded on three sides by the nearly 400-acre Randall Preserve, formerly known as Banning Ranch.

Is the Property Subject to the Surplus Land Act?

The [Coastal Corridor Alliance](#) — formerly known as the Banning Ranch Conservancy — is raising concerns over the proposed lease process sidestepping state law.

The group was one of the main organizations [working to purchase Banning Ranch](#), the land surrounding the school district property, from private owners to create a public park and protect open space. That price tag was nearly \$100 million.

Melanie Schlotterbeck, a consultant for the Coastal Corridor Alliance (CCA), said the organization has been working with some of the bidders for the Newport-Mesa property and noticed the district is not following guidelines laid out in the [Surplus Land Act](#).

State law requires public agencies to prioritize affordable housing, parks and open space when selling or leasing surplus land.

That means agencies are supposed to notify certain groups about the land before it gets opened up for a public bidding process.

Schlotterbeck said the Newport-Mesa school district never notified the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) about the land availability, as required by the Surplus Land Act.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is also the titleholder for the nearby Randall Preserve.

“In this instance as a public park agency that owns the land surrounding the surplus property on three sides, the MRCA requests that it be provided notice of the availability of this land and allowed to engage in good faith negotiations as required by the Act,” reads a [letter](#) MCRA sent to the school district.

“At this time, the MRCA has no record of any notice provided to date.”

In an [addendum](#) included with the Request for Proposals (RFP), district officials claim the property is exempt surplus land.

“The District’s property qualifies as ‘exempt surplus land’ under the Surplus Lands Act because it followed Education Code procedures, including forming an Advisory Committee, and is therefore not subject to the Act’s usual notification requirements,” school district spokesperson Annette Franco wrote in an email.

“While the Surplus Lands Act applies, NMUSD has not identified any interested parties, potential uses for the property, or even what amount of acreage may be developable, nor has it decided whether to pursue a ground lease or other disposition.”

But that’s not how the Coastal Corridor Alliance sees it.

Schlotterbeck said the Alliance's attorneys conducted an analysis and found the school district property is subject to the Surplus Land Act.

"Based on the publicly available facts regarding the District's disposition of the Property, none of these exemptions apply," reads the [legal analysis](#).

"Even if the District were to claim that an exemption applies, the Act requires it to make written findings supporting the exemption and publish those findings publicly."

"Executing a lease of the Property without first complying with the Act's notice and negotiation requirements would violate the Act, opening the District to financial penalties."

More Concerns Surrounding Sensitive Habitats

Schlotterbeck also shared concerns regarding sensitive habitat areas and which sections of the 11-acre plot are actually viable for development.

The Coastal Corridor Alliance conducted an [analysis](#) on the site to find which portions couldn't be developed due to the presence of certain species.

Since the property is located within the Coastal Zone, it's subject to the Coastal Act requirements for Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA).

The Coastal Act prohibits significant disruption of certain habitats due to rare or valuable species and requires buffer zones when developing near these areas — typically about 100 feet on all sides.

Due to the presence of the California gnatcatcher bird, burrowing owls, [vernal pools](#) and San Diego fairy shrimp — the Coastal Corridor Alliance found that only about one acre of land on the site is developable.

But Schlotterbeck said that isn't being advertised to bidders.

"If they are asking bidders to provide development plans for those 11 acres, and they're not providing them with those constraints, they are setting themselves up for an outcome that is not fully informed," she said.

The case law for these buffer zones is rooted in a lawsuit that [appeared before the California Supreme Court in 2017](#). The lawsuit was spearheaded by the Alliance back when they were still called the Banning Ranch Conservancy.

“Literally, our organization set the case law that everybody else now has to look at ESHA,” Schlotterbeck said in a phone interview.

“It’s mind-blowing to me that the organization that set the case law is still trying to require folks be realistic about what’s developable in the Coastal Zone — and folks aren’t following the rules.”

In response to bidder questions about sensitive habitat areas, school district representatives mentioned the need for potential buffer zones but did not offer specifics on developable land under the Coastal Act.

“No formal ‘development envelope’ has been mapped or approved that would definitively set aside where future development could occur,” reads a response included with the RFP information.

“Any future development proposal on the site will likely require new or amended coastal development permitting, at which time ESHA constraints, wetland boundaries, and the results of ongoing mitigation would be re-evaluated to determine allowable development areas.”

The lease bid is still open until the deadline on May 16, 2025.

“I’m simply calling out the fact that what we are witnessing from the sidelines does not feel like a process that is being followed appropriately,” Schlotterbeck said.

“It’s not fair, it’s not transparent, it’s not inclusive and it’s not accessible.” Franco said the school district may still notify groups like MRCA about the property availability.

“Should NMUSD decide it is interested in any disposition of the property, or portion thereof, it will either issue a Notice of Availability or make an exempt surplus land finding and issue a Notice of Exemption, in accordance with applicable law,” she said.

99.1 KBUU RadioMalibu.net – Apr. 18, 2025

Santa Monica Claims Malibu Lost Endorsement Of County Committee, When The Tape Shows The Opposite Is True

The Santa Monica school district headquarters is digging in on a claim that a county board has recommended against a Malibu independent school district.

In a statement released yesterday ... the school board's spokeswoman claims that the the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization voted 6-5 to recommend of the original petition to form an independent Malibu Unified School District

As KBUU News has reported ... that is not what happened.

County lawyers have also raised questions .

A review of the tape shows that the committee actually rejected a denial of the Santa Monica effort to kill Malibu's petition.

A review of the tape of the meeting shows chaos.

And the item is coming back before the county committee for some sort of revote next month.

The county committee wasn't say why .. if a vote was already taken .. it needs to be taken over again.

And the Santa Monica school board is not explaining that either.

Rather .. the district put out a statement last night.

"The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) was pleased with the majority vote to deny the petition."

That is not what the vote was However.

The district spokeswoman says our school district “looks forward to the affirmative results to deny the petition when the vote is retaken.”

OK... but if the vote was already taken ... and came down 6 to 5 in favor of Santa Monica Why is it being retaken in May???

At issue ... Santa Monica claims a right to use property tax revenue from Malibu to support the schools district 20 miles away ... while Malibu parents are demanding local control.

The Santa Monica-controlled school board will meet next Wednesday to discuss a compromise set of agreements with Malibu that have been reached outside the county process.

Only one thing is on the Wednesday agenda: Malibu.

The meeting's location??? Santa Monica.

Tejon Ranch criticizes investor group

Antelope Valley Press- BY JOHN COX, The Californian - Apr 25, 2025

The long-proposed Centennial residential and commercial project is part of the Tejon Ranch development. The Tejon Ranch Co. is battling a New Jersey-based investment group, which wants to oust three board members.

Tejon Ranch Co. has turned up the heat on a New Jersey-based investment group ahead of a May 13 shareholder meeting the Lebec-based agribusiness and real estate development company sees as critical to its future.

In a pair of official communications during the past week, the owner of California's largest contiguous parcel of private land sharpened its criticism of Bulldog Investors, the activist group trying to unseat and replace three members of Tejon Ranch's board of directors.

Tejon Ranch's relatively restrained comments earlier this month were followed last Friday, and then again Tuesday, by more aggressive comments that its challengers are pursuing a "short-sighted, self-serving and last-second" campaign that, if successful, would "choke off investment" to the company's master-planned development projects.

"The astonishing lack of effort it put into its solicitation materials and failure to articulate anything approaching a plan or strategy signals that the election of Bulldog's nominees would ultimately derail Tejon's strategy to the detriment of all shareholders," the company stated in an investor presentation filed Tuesday with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Bulldog is a relatively new investor in Tejon Ranch that has seized on investor impatience with shares trading for roughly the same price as 40 years ago.

Saying it wants to unlock the company's hidden value, the group has proposed share buybacks, quarterly earnings conferences and the reallocation of capital away from four master-planned communities Tejon Ranch has proposed comprising 35,000 homes and 35 million square feet of commercial and industrial space.

Bulldog Managing Partner Andrew Dakos on Tuesday brushed off the company's criticism, saying by phone the issue isn't about his group.

"It's about the company," he added. "We're focused on Tejon Ranch."

The conflict, unprecedented in recent memory, represents an escalation of a minority shareholder revolt last year that led to large numbers of votes against certain directors, and Tejon Ranch's executive compensation plan. The campaign, led by a different group of investors, ultimately failed.

The company's stock price appears to have responded favorably to the controversy's latest turns. It climbed from a low of \$15.16 on April 7 to close Tuesday at \$17.21, up more than 5% on the day. But it remained well below July's height of \$19.82, the peak over the last 52 weeks.

Tejon Ranch's most recent communications defended its progress and actions, including by pointing out that the company appointed a new CEO this year, installed four new directors — one of whom it noted was recommended by a shareholder — and engaged a compensation consultant who the company said enhanced transparency and disclosures.

All 10 of the director candidates nominated by the company for election or reelection next month are "critical to preserving the value of your investment," Tejon Ranch said in a news release last Friday. It accused Bulldog's nominees, including Dakos, another managing director named Phillip Goldstein and attorney Aaron Morris, of lacking necessary experience.

Dakos and Goldstein have what Tejon Ranch characterized as a "mediocre" track record with funds trading at discounts to their net asset value.

Dakos challenged the company's claim Tuesday, saying one of Bulldog's funds has appreciated by 24% over a one-year period during which Tejon Ranch's stock was flat.

Tejon Ranch said investors chose the company because it is the "right long-term strategy to maximize the value of the unique asset that is the ranch."

The company went on to defend its work on the master-planned communities — only one of which, an apartment community, has begun construction despite some

\$325 million in work. To give up those efforts now would risk its reputation with government decision-makers, it said.

Tejon Ranch also noted it has cut its spending on land-use entitlements by 38% over last five years and slashed its payroll by almost half during the past 10 years while outsourcing some of its business and keeping debt low.

Dakos pushed back on the company's assertion Bulldog is only in it for the short term.

"We're new shareholders, but we haven't said anything about being short-term shareholders" he said. "We would like nothing better than to be long-term shareholders."

East Side Union High School District To Host Hearing Monday On Move From At-Large Elections

SFGATE – By Bay City News Service – May 12, 2025

The East Side Union High School District in San Jose on Monday is hosting the first in a series of public hearings over its plans to transition from at-large elections to ones representing different areas within the district.

The school district said it received a notice in February from the Malibu-based law firm Shenkman & Hughes alleging violation of the California Voting Rights Act with its "racially polarized voting," in which voters of a racial or language minority group show voting preferences that are different from the rest of the electorate, according to state law.

Similar lawsuits have been filed or threatened in recent years against cities and other jurisdictions across the state to spur the change to district elections.

ESUHSD's Board of Trustees last month approved a process to initiate the change to district elections.

For ESUHSD, the purpose of Monday's meeting and another one upcoming on May 20 is to allow public input on the composition of the different districts and identifying communities of interest, including gathering demographic information.

The district has retained a consultant, Redistricting Partners Inc., to assist in the process and it will prepare draft districting maps based on public input and they will be presented at a meeting on June 26.

At a hearing on July 15, the consultant will present revised maps after taking additional public comment into account, and the district's Governing Board would then adopt a final map at a date to be determined. The first district-based election would then be held in November 2026.

Monday's meeting is planned for 6:15 p.m. at William C. Overfelt High School at 1835 Cunningham Ave. in San Jose. More details on ESUHSD's transition to district elections can be found at www.esuhsd.org/By-District-Trustee-Elections.