

Voter Override Ballot Measure Checklist

As many may know, the legislature passed Senate Bill 1244 (Senator Allen) by large margins in both the House and Senate with only a few nays in the spring of 2017. Several fire departments placed to measure on the 2016 General Election ballot. The Pine Strawberry Fire District prepared this checklist that was successfully used and update based on that experience. Their measure passed by 67.20 percent.

Chief Gary Morris, Pine-Strawberry Fire District 928-476-4272.

NOTE: Senate Bill 1244 only allowed an override to occur ONLY in the November elections of 2016 and 2017 and then it sunsets. **This year is the last chance to take the measure to the ballot for this November's election.**

First, time is VERY SHORT. If you intend to place a measure on the ballot this November you must get Fire Board approval quickly and the approval must occur before the deadline to submit the ballot measure to your County Elections Office.

The deadlines listed below are primarily from the Gila County Elections and Records Offices. You must check with your County Offices to confirm your dates and fees.

11 July - First day you to submit ballot language (Gila County).

10 August – Last day to submit ballot language (Gila County).

10 August (Gila County) – Pro – Con pamphlets statements due to the elections office. This would be something produced by the Support Committee if there were opposing groups. Again, have your attorney create or review your statement. They are word limits and language requirements. The Pine Strawberry Fire was not required to produce a short pro-statement to be published on the ballot as there was no opposing groups filling with the County Elections Office. Check with your Elections Office and your attorney regarding this item.

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There will be fees to pay. Check with both your County Election and Records Offices. Each fire district will have a different population base and voter registrations, thus affecting your actual costs. Below are the fees from Gila County.

\$100 – Fee to Elections Office to place measure on the ballot.

\$1,200 – Fee to Elections Office – **50 cents** per registered voter.

\$2,300 – Fee to County Recorder’s Office - **\$1.15** per registered voter.

\$5,000 – Total Budgeted by the PSFD to include election fees and printing costs of educational materials.

Pass a resolution declaring the districts intent to place a ballot item. The Fire District Board of Directors must pass a resolution declaring their Districts intent to place a levy budget override measure on the November ballot. The resolution must be submitted before the Elections Office deadline (August 10 for Gila County) along with ballot language question.

Have your attorney create or review ballot language. There are word limits and language requirements. See model language below.

Utilize independent financial adviser. The Pine Strawberry Fire District has been using a third party CPA company to manage district finances for three years. The purpose of a third party, independent financial adviser for the ballot measure is to provide an independent and transparent review of the proposal which builds trust with the voter.

Form an advisory committee of business leaders to provide an independent needs review study to confirm the need and then endorse the proposed ballot measure. This again is to build trust with the voter that the measure is really needed. The Pine Strawberry Fire District selected 5 well know business and community leaders to be the advisory committee. They received a 2 hour orientation of the Fire Districts operations, financial history, and ballot measure needs review before endorsing the measure. These committee members also attended and supported the measure at public meetings.

The Support Committee may need to file a statement of organization form with the County Elections Office to form a political action committee (PAC) - if they intend to raise money that would be used in marketing/advertising the ballot proposal. Check with your County Elections Office and your attorney.

Labor unions are allowed to participate. If they intend to raise money for the campaign, they may also need to create a PAC and file a form with the County Elections Office. There are also legal limitations in regards to how much coordination may take place between labor and the Fire Districts management team. Check with your attorney.

The Arizona Fire District Association has retained public affairs consultant to provide assistance to fire districts desiring to put a measure on the November ballot. See contact information below;

**Mr. Paul Ulan
Primary Consultants
5320 North 16th Street
Suite 111
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-294-0700
pulan@primaryconsultants.com**

If possible, survey likely voters to test perceptions about the fire district proposal. The AFDA Consultant may be of assistance

Understand that voters in opposition may form their own committee, create a PAC, and develop a no vote "Con" statement for a voter pamphlet.

Place fact sheet or explanation pamphlet and pro support statement on the Districts website.

Produce facts sheets and other educational materials to be provide attendees at public educational forms.

Schedule educational forums with residents/voters regarding the Ballot measure.

The Pine Strawberry Fire District (including the labor union) delayed publishing any public information or scheduling any public forums until after the deadline for submitting documents to the County Elections Office (i.e. submitting opposition "Con" language). Direct U.S. Postal Service mailing of the education/fact sheet post cards arrived in resident mail boxes a few days before the arrival of the early voting ballot, mail in ballot. That was followed by a compressed campaign educational campaign. The purpose of this approach was to minimize the time and for any opposition to organize.

Use a slide in your public education forums that show where the measure is located on the ballot (the Pine Strawberry ballot question was in a corner and could have been easily missed by the voter.

Develop a budget for the election and education forms.

Develop and confirm timelines and fees from your County Elections and Records Offices.

Develop your educational/campaign messaging. Make sure you can justify your needs and can explain and market it so that voters understand your messaging.

Use "public safety crisis" and "firefighter paramedic" in all your marketing language.

Keep the Fire Board informed of all activities.

Draft Ballot Language

Shall the XYZ Fire District board of directors, for a 5 year period of time, beginning with the 2018 tax year, through the 2022 tax year, be allowed to increase the Fire District levy limit to the amount not to exceed \$3.50 per assessed value on properties within the boundaries of the Fire District?

