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*Posted at 5:39 p.m. PDT Thursday, October 22, 1998*

# Vote yes on Measure E to make county supervisors more efficient

## The others, B, C, D and F, should also be approved

SANTA Clara County voters will decide on five amendments to the county charter Nov. 3, some of them merely housekeeping to bring the charter up to date. But there is one substantive change proposed: extending the number of terms county supervisors can serve.

### Editorial

*The opinion  
of the  
Mercury News*

**ELECTION 98**

Back in 1991, county voters limited supervisors to two consecutive four-year terms. Measure E would allow them to serve three terms.

Eight years is not long enough for supervisors to learn the ropes, develop expertise, initiate major projects and see them through. Twelve years will give them a chance to concentrate on the job without having to immediately look ahead to the next elective office they can seek. If Measure E passes, we won't see a return to career supervisors. We may see more informed lawmaking. Vote yes on Measure E.

We also recommend approval of the other measures. They are:

**MEASURE B:** This is strictly housekeeping, deleting references to "judges of the justice courts." The state

eliminated justice courts in 1995.

**MEASURE C:** This is a bit more than housekeeping. The current charter calls for supervisors to create an Intergovernmental Council involving cities, school districts and other local governments. This council died from lack of interest in 1993 because cities preferred to work through the county Cities Association, and other government entities found it unhelpful.

Measure C deletes references to the council, but calls on the supervisors to “encourage cooperation among local public agencies” within the county and the Bay Area. This gets rid of the useless organization but clearly defines the board’s responsibility to think and act regionally.

**MEASURE D:** This measure addresses the way county advisory groups are set up. It makes one important change, allowing people who don’t live in the county to serve on county boards, commissions and committees. This change is overdue. People who work here and are involved in the civic life of the county can bring needed expertise, even if they live in Fremont or Santa Cruz. Measure D retains preference for county residents but allows for exceptions.

It also deletes detailed instructions about how these bodies are run, so they have more flexibility. It deletes a requirement that all meetings be public, since that’s already required by state law.

**MEASURE F:** This one attempts to address the problem of long, drawn-out local run-off election campaigns, which will become even more serious in 2000, when the state primary election moves to the first week in March. Under the current system, if no one gets a majority of votes in a county race in the primary, the top two vote-getters are in a run-off in November. That means candidates are running for nearly a year, and are forced to raise and spend money for two campaigns.

One solution is the instant run-off, a voting method that determines the will of the majority in a single election. Voters rank the candidates by first choice, second choice, etc. The first-choice votes are counted and, if no candidate gets a majority, the candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. Then the second choices of voters whose first choice was eliminated are counted as first choices. If adding those votes to remaining candidates gives one of

them a majority, that candidate is elected. If not, the process is repeated until someone has a majority.

Instant run-off is not possible with the county's present voting machines. Measure F states that if and when the needed technology is available, the supervisors will have the option of using instant run-off. We're not sure if instant run-off is a good idea, but Measure F merely makes it possible to debate the proposal when the time comes. Vote yes.

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