

The Election Connection

THE SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS NEWSLETTER

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Department of Elections
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Stand Up and Be Counted – How the Census Affects Elections

How much of a difference do you make?

The 2010 Census questionnaires will be arriving in San Franciscans' mailboxes in March, and City departments are working to raise awareness of the upcoming count. The Department of Elections is getting the word out at our front counter, on our website, and right here in The Election Connection.

To increase participation, it is important to let people know how the Census actually affects their lives. The number of people who respond to the Census can influence federal funding for local education, health services, housing and other critical public programs. But how does it affect elections?

The population data gathered by the Census determines the number of members of the House of Representatives allotted to each state. In fact, congressional apportionment – along with assessment of direct taxes – is the original purpose of the Census detailed in the U.S. Constitution.

Depending on the outcome of the 2010 Census, California's congressional districts may shift. Once the Census Bureau delivers its data to the state, the legislature sets the congressional district boundaries.

Concurrently, the California Citizens Redistricting Commission – created by the passage of Proposition 11 in 2008 – will use the same Census data to set district lines for the California State Senate, Assembly, and Board of Equalization.

Here in the City, the Census data is analyzed by the Department of Elections. If there has been a substantial change in population among Supervisorial districts, a Redistricting Task Force is convened to set new boundaries.

For voters, a shift in district lines could mean a change of elected representatives at the federal, state, or local level. It may result in new precinct boundaries, and with them, different polling place locations. It has been ten years since the last Census, and the population changes since that time will remake our electoral map.

The population data captured in San Francisco by the Census Bureau this year is a picture that will shape the next decade of life here in the City. To ensure your democratic representation, make sure you're a part of this picture.

Fill out and mail your Census questionnaire this March, and put yourself on the map.

For more information on the 2010 Census, visit the City's Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs at www.sfgov.org/2010census and the federal Census Bureau at www.census.gov/2010census.

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Director's Notes

After compiling the data from its questionnaires, the U.S. Census Bureau will provide this information to the President by December 31, 2010. The Census Bureau must send the data to the California Department of Finance by April 1, 2011, and at this time the data is available to the counties.

Next, within 60 days of the Department of Finance's receiving the Census data, the Department of Elections will report to the Board of Supervisors whether variances greater than a 1% statistical mean exist among the populations of each Supervisorial district. The Board of Supervisors will then determine whether to convene a Redistricting Task Force. The Task Force is composed of three members appointed by the Board, three by the Elections Commission, and three by the Mayor.

The Task Force will hold hearings in the City and will consider the available information and public input on how to redraw the lines for the City's Supervisorial districts. Ideally, the City's Redistricting Task Force will complete its work in mid-September 2011, to coincide with the state legislature's approval of lines for federal offices and the new Citizens Redistricting Commission's determination of lines for the state offices for Senate, Assembly, and Board of Equalization.

Having the federal, state, and local lines completed close in time will allow the Department to update maps and databases within the scope of one project. Otherwise, the Department will need to double or triple its efforts if the Task Force finalizes the lines for San Francisco's Supervisorial districts after the state legislature and the Citizens Redistricting Commission approve boundaries for the federal and state offices. — John Arntz

Breaking Up is Hard to Do: Consolidations to Separate

Recent Citywide budget cuts created the need for the Department of Elections to consolidate 153 of San Francisco's 561 voting precincts for the May 19, 2009 Statewide Special Election and the November 3, 2009 Municipal Election.

California election law allows for up to six voting precincts to be consolidated into one for "local, special or consolidated elections, or statewide elections other than the direct primary, presidential primary or general election."

By consolidating precincts, the Department reduced the cost of providing poll workers, support staff, and voting equipment, and reimbursing polling place owners.

Polling place consolidation also

allowed the Precinct Services division to eliminate many of the inaccessible and smaller sites used for voting. The Department was able to reduce the number of inaccessible sites from 21 to 13 and the number of smaller locations with a usable area of less than 300 square feet from 69 to 32.

This same election law, however, requires the Department to separate these consolidated precincts for the upcoming Gubernatorial Primary Election on June 8, 2010 and the General Election

on November 2, 2010.

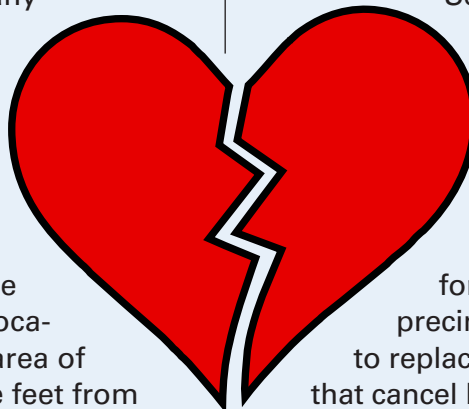
Separating consolidated precincts for the upcoming 2010 elections will present challenges. In addition to locating polling places for the 153 separated precincts, staff will have to replace any locations that cancel between elections, as well as find voting sites for the ten new precincts to be created because of an increase in voter registration.

Locating polling places is a two-part process. The Precinct Services division will first contact all current polling place owners and those not used last year because of the consolidation. Staff will create a spreadsheet to track cancellations.

Next, staff will drive through precincts without a polling place, identify accessible and centrally located sites, and attempt to bring them on board. When poll locators are unable to sign up an ADA compliant facility, they will choose the best location available and determine what can be changed to improve accessibility.

For the June 8, 2010 election, all locations must be secured by April 24. Address and relevant accessibility information is printed on the Voter Information Pamphlet that is mailed to every registered voter in San Francisco.

As this deadline approaches, don't be surprised if poll locators come knocking on your door. If you would like to assist your neighbors and us by providing a space for the upcoming election, please contact Precinct Services at (415) 554-4551.



Dear Voter,

We're just writing to let you know that we've made something special, just for you. That's right, you, the voter. It's a new e-mail form that you can use to write us. You can find it at sfelections.org/sfvote.

When you use the form, your e-mail is automatically directed to the people in the Department who can best respond to it, based on the subject line.

If you have questions about your voter registration, our Voter Services division will provide the answers. If you're running for office, the Campaign Services division will reply to your candidacy questions. If you want to know about polling place accessibility, the pros in Precinct Services will share their knowledge with you.

So next time you have a question or something to share and want to get in touch with us, go to sfelections.org/sfvote. Using the form instead of your normal e-mail service helps us to help you get any answers you need.

Sincerely,

The Department of Elections