

PRESS ADVISORY

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Supervisors Propose County Pension Reform Measure

SAN BERNARDINO—Jan. 24, 2012—Any future increase in San Bernardino County employee pension benefits would have to be approved by voters if a ballot initiative proposed by the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday is eventually approved by voters.

“At the end of the day, taxpayers pay for these pensions, so voters should have the final say in whether pension increases are appropriate. This measure allows voters to 'check' the politicians when it comes to a really long-term financial obligation,” said Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford, who proposed the ballot measure along with Fourth District Supervisor Gary Ovitt.

“This measure would have absolutely no impact on employee unions’ collective bargaining rights, but if the contracts they negotiate include increased retirement benefits, then the employee groups will have to convince voters—not just three Supervisors—that the increases are reasonable,” Rutherford said.

“Taxpayers are ultimately responsible for paying the costs of employee pension benefits, and this initiative simply gives them the same control that voters in neighboring counties have,” Supervisor Ovitt said. “Going to the voters for their approval of an increase in benefits gives power back to our residents.”

The proposed ballot measure would amend the County Charter to prohibit the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors from taking any action to increase the retirement benefits of any employee, legislative officer or elected official of the County of San Bernardino in the San Bernardino County Employees Retirement Association (or any successor retirement system), other than cost of living adjustments, without first obtaining the approval of a majority of County voters.

The measure would be similar to the City of San Diego's Proposition B, adopted in November 2006, and Orange County's Measure J, adopted in November 2008. Those pension reform initiatives were adopted with 70% and 75.4% of the vote, respectively.

The County Administrative Office will draft the proposed pension reform ballot measure and return to the Board of Supervisors for a final approval before submitting the initiative to the Registrar of Voters for the ballot on June 5.

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