GETTING TO 100%

HOW CHANGING THE ELECTION DATE CAN IMPROVE VOTER TURNOUT

February 2015

Sarah Swanbeck
Leila Pedersen
Hinnaneh Qazi
Kathay Feng

CALIFORNIA
COMMON CAUSE
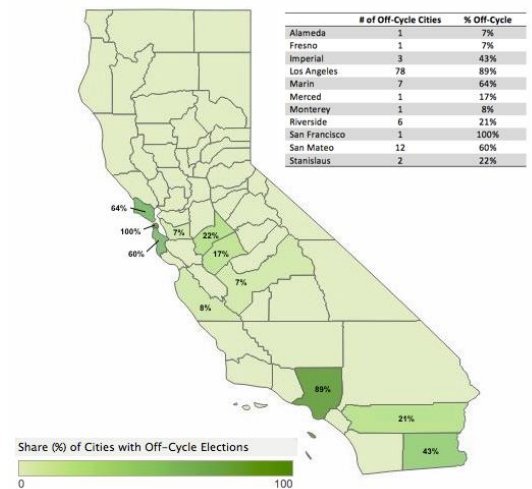Holding Power Accountable

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the greatest barometers for waning civic engagement in American politics is declining voter turnout in federal, state, and municipal elections. There are many potential contributing factors: general cynicism about government and elected officials, a decline in investment in civics education, and an increasingly transient society.

Simply moving an election to be synchronized with the even year state elections can result in a 21-36% boost in voter turnout for municipal and other local elections.

Yet there is one major contributing factor to low voter turnout – the timing of elections – that could be addressed with a relatively simple policy change. The Public Policy Institute of California surveyed 350 California cities and found that simply moving an election to be synchronized with the even year state elections can result in a 21-36 percent boost in voter turnout for municipal and other local elections.

Using available data to compare election dates across municipalities, it was found that of the 482 cities in California, 369 hold their elections concurrent with statewide elections in June and November of even years. About 23 percent, or 113 cities hold their elections on dates other than June and November of even years.

	# of Off-Cycle Cities	% Off-Cycle
Alameda	1	7%
Fresno	1	7%
Imperial	3	43%
Los Angeles	78	89%
Marin	7	64%
Merced	1	17%
Monterey	1	8%
Riverside	6	21%
San Francisco	1	100%
San Mateo	12	60%
Stanislaus	2	22%

Share (%) of Cities with Off-Cycle Elections
0 — 100

Looking at the geographic breakdown of which cities across the state hold off-cycle elections, it was found that only 11 of the 58 counties have cities with off-cycle elections. Los Angeles County overwhelmingly has the most cities with off-cycle elections –78 cities in that county have off-cycle elections. (See full-sized map in Appendix II).

METHODOLOGY

The data for this report was collected from official county elections department websites, specifically available historical and current election information. Additionally, data was cross checked against city clerk and city elections department websites to fill in any missing information. Finally, when data was not available, the relevant city department was contacted in order to confirm election dates. In the cases where a city had altered the timing of its elections in the last five years, only data for the most recent election was used to determine whether the city holds on-cycle or off-cycle elections. For example, if a city that recently consolidated elections held elections in both 2013 and 2014, only the election dates for 2014 were considered.

APPENDIX I: TABLE OF OFF-CYCLE CITIES, BY COUNTY

CITY/TOWN	ELECTION DATES
ALAMEDA	
Piedmont	February (even years)
FRESNO	
Clovis	March (odd years)
IMPERIAL	
Brawley	November (odd years)
Calipatria	November (odd years)
El Centro	November (odd years)
LOS ANGELES	

City/Town	Election Dates	City/Town	Election Dates
Agoura Hills	November (odd years)	Carson	March (odd years)
Arcadia	April (even years)	Cerritos	March (odd years)
Artesia	November (odd years)	Claremont	March (odd years)
Avalon	April (even years)	Commerce	March (odd years)
Azusa	March (odd years)	Covina	March (odd years)
Baldwin Park	November (odd years)	Cudahy	March (odd years)
Bell	March (odd years)	Culver City	April (even years)
Bell Gardens	November (odd years)	Diamond Bar	November (odd years)
Bellflower	March (odd years)	Duarte	November (odd years)
Beverly Hills	March (odd years)	El Monte	November (odd years)
Bradbury	April (even years)	El Segundo	April (even years)
Burbank	February and April (odd years)	Glendale	April (odd years)
Calabasas	November (odd years)	Glendora	March (odd years)

CALIFORNIA COMMON CAUSE, To download the full report of *"Getting To 100%: How Changing The Election Date Can Improve Voter Turnout,"* go to **cmnca.us/Gettingto100**

1

Hawaiian Gardens	November (odd years)	Paramount	March (odd years)
Hawthorne	November (odd years)	Pasadena	March (odd years)
Hermosa Beach	March & November (odd years)	Pico Rivera	November (odd years)
Hidden Hills	March (odd years)	Rancho Palos Verdes	November (odd years)
Huntington Park	March (odd years)	Redondo Beach	March (odd years)
Industry	June (odd years)	Rolling Hills	March & November (odd years)
Irwindale	November (odd years)	Rolling Hills Estates	November (odd years)
La Cañada Flintridge	March (odd years)	Rosemead	March (odd years)
La Habra Heights	March (odd years)	San Dimas	March (odd years)
La Mirada	March (odd years)	San Fernando	March (odd years)
La Puente	April (even years)	San Gabriel	March (odd years)
La Verne	March (odd years)	San Marino	November (odd years)
Lancaster	April (even years)	Santa Clarita	April (even years)
Lawndale	April (even years)	Santa Fe Springs	November (odd years)
Lomita	November (odd years)	Sierra Madre	April (even years)
Long Beach	April and June (even years)	Signal Hill	March (odd)
Los Angeles	March (odd years)	South El Monte	November (odd years)
Lynwood	November (odd years)	South Gate	March (odd years)
Malibu	April (even years)	South Pasadena	November (odd years)
Manhattan Beach	March (odd years)	Temple City	March (odd years)
Monrovia	April (odd years)	Vernon	April (even and odd years)
Montebello	November (odd years)	Walnut	April (even years)
Monterey Park	March (odd years)	West Covina	November (odd years)
Norwalk	March (odd years)	West Hollywood	March (odd years)
Palmdale	November (odd years)	Westlake Village	November (odd years)
Palos Verdes Estates	March (odd years)	Whittier	April (even years)

MARIN

Corte Madera	November (odd years)	San Anselmo	November (odd years)
Fairfax	November (odd years)	San Rafael	November (odd years)
Larkspur	November (odd years)	Tiburon	November (odd years)
Mill Valley	November (odd years)		

MERCED

Merced	November (odd years)

MONTEREY

Carmel-by-the-Sea	April (even years)

RIVERSIDE

Blythe	November (odd years)	Palm Springs	November (odd years)
Desert Hot Springs	November (odd years)	Rancho Mirage	April (even years)
Norco	November (odd years)	Riverside	June and November (odd years)

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco	November (odd years)

SAN MATEO

Belmont	November (odd years)	Redwood City	November (odd years)
Brisbane	November (odd years)	San Bruno	November (odd years)
Burlingame	November (odd years)	San Carlos	November (odd years)
Foster City	November (odd years)	San Mateo	November (odd years)
Millbrae	November (odd years)	South San Francisco	November (odd years)
Portola Valley	November (odd years)	Woodside	November (odd years)

STANISLAUS

Ceres	November (odd years)
Modesto	November (odd years)

CALIFORNIA COMMON CAUSE, To download the full report of *"Getting To 100%: How Changing The Election Date Can Improve Voter Turnout,"* go to **cmnca.us/Gettingto100**

3

APPENDIX II: CONCENTRATION OF OFF-CYCLE CITIES

	# of Off-Cycle Cities	% Off-Cycle
Alameda	1	7%
Fresno	1	7%
Imperial	3	43%
Los Angeles	78	89%
Marin	7	64%
Merced	1	17%
Monterey	1	8%
Riverside	6	21%
San Francisco	1	100%
San Mateo	12	60%
Stanislaus	2	22%

64%
100%   7%   22%
60%   17%
            7%
8%
89%
21%
43%

Share (%) of Cities with Off-Cycle Elections

0   100

CALIFORNIA COMMON CAUSE, To download the full report of *Getting To 100%: How Changing The Election Date Can Improve Voter Turnout,* go to **cmnca.us/Gettingto100**

4