

MEASURE BB - RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Shall a measure be adopted to change the current method of electing City Council and Board of Education Members from obtaining a plurality of votes to Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), in order to make Albany's elections more representative of the votes and preferences of its voters?

The way it is now: Elected members of both the City and the Albany Unified School District are elected by plurality at large (“first past the post”) regime. Under the current plurality at large system, voters have a number of votes equal to the number of open seats and each candidate may be selected only once.

What Measure BB would do if it passes:

Measure BB will change the City’s election system and the Albany Unified School District’s election system from plurality at large to “Ranked Choice Voting” (RCV).

RCV allows voters to rank candidates for elected office in order of preference, including write-in candidates. Voters may rank as few or as many candidates on the ballot as allowed by the equipment.

In a single-seat election, voting tabulation proceeds in rounds. Each ballot is counted for the highest ranked candidate. If there are only two candidates for an office, there is only one round and the candidate with more top-ranked votes is declared the winner. If there are three or more candidates for a single office, the candidate with the fewest top-ranked votes after the first round is defeated. His or her votes are then transferred to the highest ranked continuing candidate for that office. Then, a new round of tabulation starts and rounds continue until a candidate is declared the winner. In a multiple-office election, each ballot is counted and if there is at least one candidate with more votes than the election threshold (the number of votes sufficient to be elected), each candidate above that threshold will be declared elected. Tabulations and rounds continue until all seats are filled.

The City Clerk would tabulate the election results, certify them, and publish a summary report of the final tabulation. In addition, the City Clerk would be required to conduct a voter education and outreach program regarding the measure and the RCV system.

YES People for Measure BB say:

RCV lets you rank the candidates, ensuring your vote goes to your most preferred candidate still in the running. This means we can vote for the candidate we want instead of who we think is most electable, our government will accurately reflect our values, elected officials will be more accountable to us, and underrepresented groups will have a fair chance to elect a candidate of their choice.

Under RCV more women and candidates of color run in and win elections, leading the courts to use RCV to resolve voting rights cases and ensure fairer outcomes for protected minority voters.

By adopting RCV in Albany, we will:

- Empower us each to vote our conscience and support candidates with the best ideas without having to choose strategically.
- Make it more likely that Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black and Latino communities have a voice in elections.
- Ensure all communities have a seat at the table and fair and equal representation in government.

NO People against Measure BB say:

RCV for Albany would be expensive, complicated and pointless. RCV's advantage lies in avoiding run-off elections when there are far more candidates than open seats. In Albany we often have the opposite problem finding enough candidates to have competitive elections at all. In addition, Albany does not use run-off elections, so avoiding them is not an issue.

RCV advocates claim that it would make it easier for ethnic candidates to win in Albany. But this is wishful thinking. RCV voting algorithms do not consider race or class.

Here in Albany, when candidates of color run for office, they tend to win and get reelected. The problem is not getting these candidates elected, it is getting them to run for office in the first place. RCV does nothing to solve that problem.

With RCV, a voter who has a choice of four candidates has 24 possible ways to rank them. With five candidates, there are 120 possible rankings. California ballots are already complicated enough. RCV will just add to voter fatigue and could even discourage participation in the electoral process.

For Albany, RCV makes no sense. The hypothetical benefits do not outweigh the very real costs of an additional \$26,000 per election.

Measure CC: Real Property Transfer Tax To support City of Albany general services, with funding that cannot be taken by Sacramento, including: emergency response services, environmental programs, community services and local business programs, shall a measure increasing the City's real property transfer tax rate from \$11.50 to \$15.00 per \$1,000 purchased, providing an additional \$392,000 annually, until ended by voters, with all funds remaining local be adopted?

The way it is now: The City of Albany currently imposes a real property transfer tax at the rate of \$11.50 per \$1,000 of real property interest transferred. The real property transfer tax currently provides approximately \$1,290,250.00 annually to the General Fund to pay for general City services and programs.
Majority Vote required to pass.

What Measure CC would do if it passes:

Measure CC would increase the real property transfer tax rate from \$11.50 to \$15.00 per \$1,000 of real property interest transferred. This rate increase will generate an additional \$392,000.00 in new revenue. The new rate would become effective on January 1, 2021 and remain in effect until modified or repealed by voters.

Measure CC does not change the current administration of the tax. The real property transfer tax generally applies to transactions involving the sale and purchase of real property although certain transactions are exempt from the tax.

Measure CC would be a "general tax". All revenue from this tax would be deposited into the City's General Fund and could be used for general City operations and services. Such funds cannot be appropriated by the State of California.

YES People for Measure CC say

The pandemic has hit Albany's budget hard just as we are beginning to grapple with a 15-year effort to rebuilt state pension fund balances, which will require additional funding.

This additional revenue source will not affect day-to-day living for Albany taxpayers but will only affect property owners at the time of sale. For every \$1,000 of income from the sale of a house or condo, this tax will increase from \$11.50 to \$15.00, e.g., if you are selling a condo for \$500,000, your transfer tax will rise from \$5,750 to \$7,500, an increase of \$1,750. If you are selling a house for \$1 million, your transfer tax will rise from \$11,500 to \$15,000, an increase of \$3,500. Renters will be unaffected by the increase in the transfer tax. The dramatic rise in home values has left homeowners with unexpected large gains in income from sales. The increase in the transfer tax will dedicate a small part of these gains to fund vital city services.

Rebuttal to Argument in Favor of CC: Lack of a sunset provision decouples this tax from the pandemic. Proceeds of this tax are really going to pay off the pension debt. Homeowners and renters will be affected by higher mortgage and rent payments.

NO People against Measure CC say

Albany homeowners voted down an identical measure not long ago and there are two other local tax measures on the ballot. With little fiscal analysis the authors crossed out the old tax rate and inserted a much higher rate. There is no guarantee that the money from this tax will be directed to emergency services, environmental programs, community services or local business programs. City Attorney's impartial analysis states that the "tax would be deposited into the City's General Fund and could be used for general City operations and services." Albany already has an extremely high transfer tax rate. Increasing it will tie it as one of the three highest flat rates in California. While these taxes are typically split between buyers and sellers, the new tax increases would cost homeowners and homebuyers.

Now is not the time to make housing in Albany even more expensive.

Rebuttal to Argument Against CC Proceeds from the tax have been carefully calculated to match Albany's general fund needs. The transfer tax is split between buyer and seller so it is a small amount for each. A 1.5% transfer tax would be equal to Berkeley's and Oakland's transfer tax.

Albany Measure DD: Utility User's Tax: To support City of Albany general services including: disaster and emergency preparedness, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, emergency response and environmental sustainability, shall a measure increasing the City's utility users' tax from 7% to 9.5% for gas and electric service, and applying the tax to water service at 7.5%, providing an additional \$675,000 annually until ended by voters, exempting self-generated energy, exempting low-income households, requiring independent audits, with all funds remaining local, be adopted? Majority vote required to pass.

The way it is now: The City of Albany ("City") currently imposes a utility users' tax ("UUT") of seven percent (7%) for gas and electricity. The City currently does not impose a tax on water service. The gas and electric UUT currently provides approximately \$887,000.00 annually to the General Fund to pay for general City services and programs.

What Measure DD will do:

Measure DD was placed on the ballot by the Albany City Council and, if approved by a majority of Albany voters, will amend the Municipal Code to increase the maximum gas and electric UUT rate from seven percent (7%) to nine and one half percent (9.5%) and apply the UUT to water service at a maximum rate of seven and one half percent (7.5%). It is projected that the UUT rate increase on gas and electricity and the new UUT on water service will together generate an additional \$675,600.00 in new revenues annually.

The UUT is typically computed on the basis of monthly usage and collected by the utility services provider in accordance with the service provider's regular billing practices. The increased gas and electric UUT rates and the new water UUT rate would remain in effect until modified or repealed by Albany voters.

Measure DD would be a "general tax". All revenue from this tax would be deposited into the City's General Fund and could be used for general City operations and services. The Measure expresses an intent that the City spend at least one-third (1/3) of the UUT revenue on implementing the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and supporting environmental sustainability programs.

YES People for Measure DD say:

Albany met its 2020 pollution reduction goal as a community by reducing our carbon emissions. Help Albany meet its next critical climate protection goals by raising funds to support climate action while reducing energy costs for low-income Albany residents.

These funds are needed to support Albany's efforts to promote sustainability, provide emergency response planning, and other important city services. Measure DD recommends a third of the new revenues be used for climate protection and adaptation actions such as: Transitioning from gas to clean, renewably generated electricity, increasing our urban forest and green infrastructure to reduce temperatures, creating incentives to encourage residents to use zero emission forms of transportation.

We need to rapidly eliminate fossil fuel use to protect the climate. There are cost competitive, electric appliances that can replace older, polluting and unsafe natural gas fired appliances. Measure DD will raise funds in an equitable way to promote and encourage our transition to clean electrically powered appliances while also increasing the safety and health of our residents.

Low-income Albany households enrolled in CARE and CAP cost reduction programs are exempted from the proposed and EXISTING utility taxes.

NO People against Measure DD say:

No Argument Against submitted.

Measure EE: Paramedic Advanced Life Support Fire Engines and Ambulance Special Tax - Two-thirds vote

To maintain City of Albany paramedic, advanced life support, fire engine and ambulance service, with funding that cannot be taken by Sacramento; shall a measure increasing the annual current paramedic advanced life support fire engine and ambulance service special tax from \$23.66 to \$68 per assigned residential unit, providing an additional \$359,600 annually until ended by voters, exempting very low-income residents, with annual independent audits, with all funds remaining local, be adopted?

The way it is now: The City of Albany currently imposes a Paramedic Advanced Life Support Fire Engines and Ambulance Special Tax (“ALS tax”) at the rate of \$23.66 per residential unit in the City. Commercial properties pay \$47.32 per parcel. This tax currently provides approximately \$191,880 annually to the City’s Emergency Medical Services Fund.

What Measure EE would do if it passes:

The ALS tax rate will increase from \$23.66 to \$68.00 per residential unit, and from \$47.32 to \$136 per parcel for commercial properties. It is anticipated that this increase will generate an additional \$359,600 in new revenues. The ALS tax applies to all residential and commercial properties in the City. Measure EE adds the following exceptions:

- 1) Exempts very low-income homeowners from paying the tax on their residential units, and
- 2) Allows very low-income renters to obtain a rebate for the ALS tax imposed on their rented units.

Measure EE is a “special tax,” meaning that revenues from the tax must be spent only to provide paramedic, advanced life support, fire engine and ambulance transport services. All revenues raised by the tax would remain in the City and could not be appropriated by the State, County, or any other agency.

YES People for Measure EE say:

Albany has good quality ambulance services because our fire department emergency responders are able to transport patients directly to hospitals without handing them off to private ambulance companies, as is the case in other cities. Response times for medical emergencies are short in Albany and our paramedics are very experienced and professional.

The additional funding is needed because:

- Alameda County has significantly cut back on its paramedic support. More and more of the costs for Albany’s ambulance services are being covered by the city’s general fund.
- Prices for advance lifesaving equipment are rising and our existing equipment is aging.
- Our fire department has seen a 34% increase in calls for emergency services in the last 10 years.

The measure adds exemptions for low-income homeowners and renters.

NO People against Measure EE say:

Measure EE proposes to charge the owner of a 750 sq. ft. one-bedroom condominium the same amount as the owner of a 4,500 sq. ft. five bedroom house. Thus, the owner of the smaller home will bear a much larger burden than the owner of the larger home. Additionally, both would pay almost as much as the owner of a large commercial property such as Target.

Other cities have voted to tax residences and commercial property based on square footage. Berkeley passed two such measures last March, with over 80% of votes in favor.

While the services funded by this measure are vital, providing them in this way is not; there are more progressive options.