



JOEL ANDERSON

**SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: April 21, 2026

18

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

**ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR CONDUCTING COUNTY POLLING ACTIVITIES
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

Members of County government periodically conduct polling activities to gauge public opinion and specifically, levels of support and opposition, to matters that may be considered by the Board of Supervisors and the public. Polling can be a valuable tool to understand public sentiment on policy issues and the information it provides can prove helpful in determining whether there is sufficient public interest in moving forward to place an initiative before County voters.

As a public agency entrusted with using taxpayer resources to deliver on the needs of our constituents, we must ensure that all taxpayer funded polling activities are conducted in an unbiased manner and that no methods – such as “push polling” – are used to influence voter opinions. It is equally important to confirm that public funds are used in compliance with all applicable laws and are not applied, intentionally or unintentionally, for campaign or political purposes.

To strengthen transparency and legal compliance, I recommend that the Board direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with County Counsel to develop and implement a strategy and process governing the use of County funds for polling and related activities. This process should require County Counsel to review and approve proposed polling questions before they are used as well as the scope of work and compensation terms for any polling firms retained by members of County government. It should also ensure public access to the information used to poll County residents, the polling results and polling consultant contracting details.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with County Counsel to develop and implement a strategy and process governing the use of County funds for polling and related activities. This process should:

SUBJECT: ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR CONDUCTING COUNTY POLLING ACTIVITIES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

- a. require County Counsel to review and approve proposed polling questions before they are used as well as the scope of work and compensation terms for any polling firms retained by members of County government;
- b. require the following be posted online within 30 days of consultant completion of work:
 - i. polling questions that were used;
 - ii. demographic data of those polled;
 - iii. polling data results;
 - iv. consultant contract terms, scope and compensation

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The recommended actions will enhance transparency and accountability in County government processes, benefitting all residents regardless of their ethnicity, economic situation, age, physical condition, religious beliefs, or other backgrounds or characteristics.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The recommended actions support organizational sustainability through the establishment of consistent and legally compliant procedures. It will also help to ensure that limited County funds are used in a prudent and thoughtful manner.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's actions. There may be future fiscal impacts associated with future related recommendations, which staff would return to the Board for consideration and approval. If approved, the recommended action will result in no change in General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

This action is not expected to impact local businesses. Under the recommended action, contracting processes would remain unchanged, aside from ensuring existing legal standards are consistently applied.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

Members of County government periodically conduct polling activities to gauge public opinion and specifically, levels of support and opposition, to matters that may be considered by the Board of Supervisors and the public. Polling can be a valuable tool to understand public sentiment on policy issues and the information it provides can prove helpful in determining whether there is sufficient public interest in moving forward to place an initiative before County voters.

As a public agency entrusted with using taxpayer resources to deliver on the needs of our constituents, we must ensure that all taxpayer funded polling activities are conducted in an unbiased manner and that no methods – such as “push polling” – are used to influence voter opinions. It is equally important to confirm that public funds are used in compliance with all

**SUBJECT: ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR CONDUCTING COUNTY POLLING
ACTIVITIES (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

applicable laws and are not applied, intentionally or unintentionally, for campaign or political purposes.

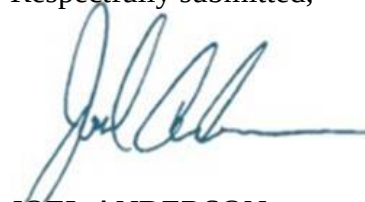
Recent polling efforts led by members of County government surveyed hundreds of likely voters to assess their views on potential ballot proposals. The questions used during this polling were developed by a polling firm hired and compensated using taxpayer funds to assess voter views on Board of Supervisor term limits and the potential to enact a variety of new taxes, fees and charter amendment changes. Whenever taxpayer funding is used by a member of County government for activities that may intersect with political or campaign-related matters, it is essential to verify strict compliance with local, state and federal law as well as ensuring the approach remains unbiased.

To strengthen transparency and legal compliance, I recommend that the Board direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with County Counsel to develop and implement a strategy and process governing the use of County funds for polling and related activities. This process should require County Counsel to review and approve proposed polling questions before they are used as well as the scope of work and compensation terms for any polling firms retained by members of County government. It should also ensure public access to the information used to poll County residents, the polling results and polling consultant contracting details.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

This item supports the County of San Diego's 2026–2031 Strategic Plan's Empower (Transparency and Accountability) initiative by maintaining program and fiscal integrity through reports, disclosures and audits and Community (Communications) initiative by creating proactive communication that is accessible and transparent.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joel Anderson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A