

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

July 9, 2024

Delivering a More Equitable and Transparent Governance Model for Los Angeles County

In February 2023, in light of Los Angeles County's growing population, diverse communities and lack of opportunity for co-governance, the Board of Supervisors (Board), passed a motion¹ to study and propose more transparent and inclusive structures of policymaking. The current structure of governance in Los Angeles County (County) suffers from opacity and inefficiency, hindering its ability to effectively serve all residents. Reform is not just necessary but imperative for the public to access government services, for the County to center the needs of those most impacted by policy, and to allow our most marginalized communities to participate fully in the legislative process.

Transparency is the cornerstone of accountable governance. In Los Angeles County, the complexity of decision-making processes often obscures the reasons behind policy outcomes from public view. Local governments are increasingly experimenting with innovative strategies to advance more equitable and inclusive policy and budget development processes, such as through launching participatory budgeting processes and enabling virtual public participation in meetings. In the Second District, \$1 million has been dedicated to a participatory budget pilot to let community members in Florence Firestone and Ladera Heights directly influence and decide how a public budget will be allocated.

¹ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/177711.pdf>

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Additionally, while the County has informal policy committees (also known as clusters), there is no requirement that proposed legislation (also known as motions) be in print or be reviewed for a certain period of time beyond the 120 hour and 72 hours required by the Brown Act, before being voted on. In Sacramento County, motions must be submitted to the Executive Officer three weeks in advance of appearing on a public agenda. San Bernardino has committees appointed by the full Board and the meeting agenda must be available 3 days in advance. Other County governments like Alameda County and the City and County of San Francisco use a policy committee structure to deliberate and vet policies amongst elected officials before they advance to the full Board or Council. In other jurisdictions, this process also includes a public budget and appropriations committee, through which comprehensive priorities and key considerations are discussed before final decisions are made. Further, some counties such as San Diego County require that County Counsel, the Chief Administrative Office, and the Board Chair review and approve the filing of all Board motions.

The size of the Board of Supervisors that serves 10 million people should be analyzed to determine if it can effectively represent all Angelenos, but that alone will not solve the structural challenges of governing. A reformed governance structure can streamline decision-making processes, making them more responsive to the needs of residents. Currently, bureaucratic hurdles and fragmented responsibilities often lead to delays and inefficiencies in policy implementation. By centralizing decision-making authority, reviewing and analyzing legislation in advance, and improving coordination among various county agencies, reform can enhance the county's capacity to tackle pressing issues such as homelessness, transportation, and environmental sustainability. It is imperative that any review of the County's governance structure include reforms and enhanced transparency within the policy committee structure.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

- 1) Direct County Counsel to report back to the Board in writing within 7 days with an analysis of the Board's authority to create Committees consisting of Board of Supervisor members that would review upcoming Board actions such as Board letters and motions before they are placed on a Board meeting agenda. The analysis should include identification of any legal limitations on how many

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members of the Board of Supervisors could sit on each committee and any legal limitations on the subject matter that could be considered by these committees.

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