

October 22, 2024

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH

Modernizing the Los Angeles County Code by Using Gender-Inclusive Language

The Los Angeles County Code (County Code) comprises the roles, responsibilities, and functions of Los Angeles County (County) that have been approved by Boards of Supervisors for over a century. The County Code runs eight, long volumes and has hundreds of chapters and sections that range from creating department heads to building codes and employees' benefits plans.

While the County has become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable, the County Code contains a significant number of archaic, inappropriate references to gender and gendered terms. County officers and employees are referred to as "he" in several sections. Language written in 1942 "constructs gender" as "the masculine gender includes the feminine and neuter genders." A section written in 1960 declares that a County employee must return "his" badge upon leaving a position.

County Counsel has already begun using gender-inclusive language in drafting County ordinances, but large portions of the County Code remain unexamined and unchanged.

It is critical that the County Code reflects the foundational values of diversity and inclusion which have been embedded into the County's policies, programs, and services. The use of gender-inclusive language will ensure all County residents, employees, and communities are not

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excluded from the laws which govern them.

“Seventy-Six Cities” is the County’s official song. The song was composed by brothers Steve and Paul Colwell as they were on their way to Southern California by train. It was played and sung for the first time by the cast of “Sing-Out ’65” at a meeting of the Board of Supervisors on Sept. 14, 1965. The song’s closing lyrics serve as a reminder that “this world that’s torn asunder with prehistoric hate, needs the County of the Angels to bring it up to date.”

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct County Counsel to use gender-inclusive language, wherever possible, in all future additions to the County Code.
2. Direct County Counsel to develop a plan that is more expedited than the current practice for modernizing the County Code, excluding the County Charter, by replacing existing gender-specific language with appropriate gender-inclusive language. This plan shall include timelines for a comprehensive review of the County Code, phases of implementation, and recommendations for gender-inclusive language standards.
3. Direct County Counsel to provide the Board with a report back on this plan, in writing, in 120 days.

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