

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 18, 2017

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Susan M. Ranochak, Assessor Clerk Recorder and Registrar of Voters 

RE: Impact Report on the Consolidation of Covelo Fire Protection District To
Even Number Years

Summary

On December 7, 2017, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors received Resolution No. 2017-01 from the Covelo Fire Protection District announcing its desire to consolidate the Covelo Fire Protection District election cycle with the November General Election that is held in even numbered years. As required by Section 10404(d); the following is a discussion of the fiscal impact that may result due to the consolidation along with the possible impact to the voter. Lastly there is a statement regarding the findings required by Section 10404(d) of the Elections Code.

Fiscal Impact

The blending of local elections with statewide elections is anticipated to increase the overall level of services required of the Elections Division. For example, local elections require a higher level of candidate support when it comes to nomination papers, candidate statements, etc. This will most likely result in a need for additional General Fund as the county will be responsible for paying the increase in division costs attributed to the Elections Division. However, the County would in turn bill the District for their share of those election costs, giving the County an offsetting revenue stream.

The following is a table that compares the actual costs per voter to the District for the November 2015 Consolidated District Election and the actual cost the county incurred for the November 2014 Statewide General Election for the same voters. I have also included a projected cost for combining those two elections and the anticipated costs to each entity.

District	Number of Reg. Voters	Actual Cost Per Voter 11/2015	Actual Cost Per Voter 11/2014	Anticipated Cost of Consolidation	Cost To County General Fund	Cost To District
Covelo Fire Protection District	844	\$3.13				\$3.13
County of Mendocino	844		\$2.94		\$2.94	
County and Covelo Fire Protection District				\$4.00	\$2.00	\$2.00

The projected increase in election cost is due to a larger sample ballot pamphlet, a longer official ballot and the probability of multiple official ballot cards, creating an increase cost in logic and accuracy testing, ballot layout and an increase in complication of programming and report processing. The division will also see an increase in postage due to additional pages in each of the sample ballot pamphlets and the possibility of multiple ballot cards mailed to each vote by mail voter. Additional staff hours will be required to process the official ballot if it contains two ballot cards and the entire canvass and certification process will lengthen.

However, there is some savings to be realized by both the County and the District as a result of this consolidation. The District's cost savings are anticipated to be \$955 and the County could see savings as much as \$800. There will be several districts that will see an increase in their elections costs. These districts are the Covelo Community Services District and Round Valley Water District.

Impact On Voters

The original purpose of the Unified District Election Law (UDEL) odd-year election is to provide a local platform for districts and candidates to appeal to voters, avoiding conflict with the extensive state and federal general election cycle. Local candidates in an odd-year election are prominent and can better educate voters on their election race.

Even though voter turnout has been historically higher in a General election with the consolidation there will be more contests and candidates appearing on it, which increases the complexity of the ballot. This typically leads to an increase in voter drop off. This is where the voter fails to make selections on the ballot as they get to the end of the ballot.

Section 10404(d) Finding

Section 10404(d) requires that the Board of Supervisors approve the resolution unless it finds that Mendocino County's ballot style, voting equipment or computer capacity is such that additional elections or materials cannot be handled. No evidence exists to support such a finding at this time.