

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 24, 2020

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Katrina Bartolomie, Assessor Clerk Recorder and Registrar of Voters 

RE: Impact Report on the Consolidation of Westport County Water District To
Even Number Years

Summary

On September 23, 2020 the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors received Resolution No. 2020-1 from the Westport County Water District announcing its desire to consolidate the Westport County Water District election cycle with the November General Election that is held in even numbered years. As required by Section 10404, 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 of the Elections Code.

Fiscal Impact

The blending of local district 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 the candidate filing process, candidate statements, additional ballot pages and sample ballot pages, as well as additional time processing and counting the additional ballot pages. 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 each district for their share of those election costs, giving the County an offsetting revenue stream.

The Westport County Water District has not gone to election for many years. The qualified candidates have not exceeded the number of seats available for each particular election. The County and the District's cost savings, if any, are unknown. When a district does not go to election, we bill the district a set fee for not going to election, plus their portion of the published legal notice. This will continue to be our process in the future. At this point there does not appear to be any additional fiscal impact.

Impact On Voters

The original purpose of the Unified District Election Law (UDEL) odd-year election was 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 were prominent and could 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 Finding

Section 10404 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.