

La Mesa-Spring Valley School District

Transition to By-Trustee Area Elections Frequently Asked Questions

On May 7, 2019, the Board of Trustees of the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District voted to approve Resolution 18-19-21, declaring its intent to transition from its current at-large elections to by-trustee area elections for Board members.

What's the difference between at-large and by-trustee area elections?

Currently, the District has an at-large election system, where voters of the entire District are able to vote for all members of the Board. Switching to by-trustee elections will require the District to create five geographic trustee areas within the District, each assigned to one seat on the Board. Voters within each trustee area will vote only for candidates for the seat on the Board assigned to their trustee area. Regardless of trustee area, all Board Members will continue to represent the entire District. This is similar to elections for the city councils of El Cajon and Santee and the governing board of the Grossmont Union High School District.

Why is the District transitioning to by-trustee area elections?

Like more than 200 school districts and 100 cities across the state, the District is making this change in large part due to the California Voting Rights Act or CVRA. Rather than wait for a potential lawsuit or demand letter – which could cost the District a minimum of \$30,000 – the District has decided to act proactively to transition to by-trustee area elections.

What is the California Voting Rights Act?

The California Voting Rights Act or CVRA allows plaintiffs to sue a local agency where at-large elections may prevent minorities and protected classes from electing candidates of their choice to local office and to recover their attorneys' fees if they are successful. Moreover, a potential plaintiff can recover up to \$30,000 in attorneys' fees for preparing a demand letter even if an agency immediately makes the change to by-trustee area elections. To date, no local agency has successfully defended itself against a CVRA challenge.

Who creates the trustee area boundaries?

The Board will work with a professional demographer to create proposed trustee area boundaries which will be refined and revised following the public's input. Ultimately, the Board will adopt a proposed map which will be reviewed and approved by the San Diego County Board of Education.

What is the timeline for the drawing the trustee areas?

The Board intends to follow the following schedule to develop the trustee areas boundary map:

- May 7: First Pre-Map Public Hearing for community input
- June 4: Second Pre-Map Public Hearing for community input
- June 18: First Public Hearing on draft maps
- July 9: Second Public Hearing on draft maps
- August 8: Third Public Hearing on draft maps and adoption of boundary map

All public hearings will take place during regularly scheduled Board meetings. Please note that the above timeline is tentative and subject to change.

Would Board Members represent the entire District, or their respective trustee areas?

All Board Members would continue to represent the entire District, regardless of trustee area.

When will the new trustee areas take effect?

Once the transition is approved, Board elections will be transitioned to by-trustee area elections beginning with the 2020 election. The current Board members will continue in office until the expiration of their terms in 2020 or 2022.

How will the change to by-trustee area elections affect me?

Beginning in 2020, voters will only be able to vote for one Board member who resides in the trustee area in which they live.

Where can I learn more?

Please feel free to contact the District's Superintendent, David Feliciano, with any comments or questions by calling (619) 668-5700 or by email at David.Feliciano@lmsvschools.org