

LA County Measure A - Charter Amendment Requiring Binding Arbitration for Labor Disputes with Los Angeles County Certified Public Safety Employee Organizations

TYPE: Legislative (Board of Supervisors)

QUESTION: Shall the LA County Charter be amended to prohibit strikes and require binding arbitration for certain employees of the Fire Department, Sheriff's Department, and Department of Medical Examiner ("Certified Public Safety Employee Organizations") to resolve labor disputes? This measure will pass with a majority (50% +1)

BACKGROUND: Every three years, LA County negotiates with its labor unions to agree on, among other things, Cost-Of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) and other economic and noneconomic benefits. Under California law, public safety employees cannot go on strike. Currently, when labor disputes between public safety employee unions and LA County can't be resolved, the county can implement its best and final offer, even if the union disagrees with it. The county has imposed contract terms after reaching impasse over negotiations twice since 2001,

- the Union of American Physicians and Dentists in 2001 and
- Supervising Deputy Probation Officers in 2024.

PROPOSAL: The Measure would amend the LA County Charter as follows:

- establish a binding arbitration process for resolving labor disputes between the County and Certified Public Safety Employee unions
- require the Parties to negotiate in good faith on matters related to wages, hours, and other working conditions;
- appoint a 3-member Board of Arbitrators panel to make a decision on relevant memoranda of understanding if the Parties are unable to resolve disputes or controversies. The 3-member Board consists of:
 - one member appointed by the County
 - one member appointed by the Union
 - third member must be agreed to by the Chair of the board, and representatives from the County and the Union
- require that if no agreement is reached before the conclusion of the arbitration hearings,
 - each party will be directed to submit a final offer of settlement on each remaining issue in dispute;
 - require that the Board of Arbitrators, by majority vote, selects which final offer to impose for each issue based on specified criteria.
 - The decision is disclosed to the parties involved. The parties then have 30 days to resolve their differences and amend the decision before it becomes binding and made public.
- All parties equally share the burden of the costs of arbitration.

FISCAL EFFECT: Since County and employee union equally share the costs of arbitration, there are no costs to County residents or taxpayers.

SUPPORTERS SAY:

According to the LA Times, Unions say the measure would give them needed leverage and remove political pressure from the thorniest contract questions.

County Supervisor Horvath said more than 20 jurisdictions in California use binding arbitration for public safety workers, including the counties of [San Francisco](#) and Sacramento. She said “It incentivizes both parties to come to a fair agreement.”

OPPONENTS SAY:

According to the LA Times, critics say it shifts financial control away from politicians and into the hands of unaccountable arbitrators, which could lead to bloated labor costs.

“Arbitrators aren’t elected, they’re not required to weigh countywide trade-offs like homeless services, healthcare, capital improvements, all of those things,” said Supervisor Holly Mitchell, the only supervisor to abstain from the vote.

Acting County Executive Officer Joseph M. Nicchitta said “Because the arbitrators ‘pick a winner’ as between the parties’ final offers, the decision will no longer be a compromise. One side will win.” Substantial raises mandated by arbitrators, he wrote, “could, among other things, materially and detrimentally increase the County’s day-to-day operating costs, lead to workforce reductions and program curtailments, balloon our unfunded pension liabilities, and damage the County’s credit ratings.”

WHAT DOES “YES” MEAN?

A “yes” vote means you approve amending the LA County Charter to require binding arbitration for labor disputes with Certified Public Safety Employee Organizations.

A “no” vote means you do not approve amending the LA County Charter and the Board of Supervisors can continue to impose contract terms when there is an impasse in negotiations.