

Riverside County Committee on School District Organization

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Q. What is the Riverside County Committee on School District Organization?

- A. County committees on school district organization were created in each county by the California State Legislature in 1949 pursuant to Education Code Section 4000 et seq. The Riverside County Committee on School District Organization (hereinafter referred to as the County Committee) is governed by the rules and regulations established by the Legislature and by its own policies and procedures. Its duties and responsibilities pertain to school and community college districts.

The County Committee is charged by the state to study and make recommendations and decisions on school district reorganization; establishing, rearranging, and abolishing trustee areas; and on changing the number of governing board members and the manner in which they are elected. The County Committee's responsibilities include revising its countywide Master Plan for school district organization. The activities of the County Committee are coordinated by the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE).

The County Committee interacts with the California Department of Education, State Board of Education (SBE), the Riverside County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, the Riverside County Department of Public Works, and other state and county agencies.

Q. Who serves on the County Committee?

- A. The County Committee consists of 11 members – two from each of the five county supervisorial districts (the districts served by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors) and one member serving at-large. Members are elected annually by a voting representative of each of the 27 school and community college district governing boards in Riverside County. The term of office is four years and begins upon election. County Committee members serve without pay.

Q. How often does the County Committee meet?

- A. The County Committee meets as needed at the Riverside County Office of Education at 3939 13th Street, Riverside. Public hearings related to matters before the County Committee are held throughout the county as required by law, generally, in the district(s) affected by the proposed

reorganization. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson or by a quorum of the County Committee. A majority of the members of the County Committee constitutes a quorum. The meetings are subject to the provisions of the Brown Act.

Q. How do items get on the County Committee's agenda?

- A. The Riverside County Superintendent of Schools or his designee serves as Secretary to the County Committee. Agenda items are originated by or submitted to the Secretary for the County Committee. Official minutes of each County Committee meeting are maintained and are available at RCOE.

Q. What is "school district reorganization"?

- A. The reorganization of school districts is one of the major responsibilities of the County Committee. An action to reorganize school districts can refer to any one of the following:
- a) transfer of territory between/among school districts
 - b) school district unification or deunification
 - c) dissolution or lapsation of a school district
 - d) annexation of all or part of one district to another district
 - e) establishment/abolishment of trustee areas and increase/decrease in the number of trustees
 - f) formation of new districts of all types from territory of existing districts

The processes to accomplish any of the above actions are similar.

Q. What is the process for proposing a transfer of territory?

- A. An action to transfer territory from one school district to another is initiated by the submission of a valid petition to the County Committee. The petition may be initiated by:
- 1) at least 25 percent of the registered voters residing in the area proposed for transfer (or by ten percent of the registered voters of the entire school district)
 - 2) the owner of the property if it is uninhabited
 - 3) a majority of the members of the governing boards of each affected district
 - 4) a resolution approved by a majority of the members of a city council, county board of supervisors, governing body of a special district, or local agency formation commission that has jurisdiction over all or a portion of the school district.

The Secretary to the County Committee assists petitioners in securing the appropriate documentation.

After the County Committee has conducted required public hearings and studied the proposal, it prepares a report of the study findings based on requirements as specified in the Education Code, and makes a determination to approve/disapprove the proposal. If the County Committee disapproves the proposal, the process ends. If the County Committee approves the proposal, an election is held on the proposal in territory selected by the County Committee. If the proposal passes at the election, the transfer action is implemented at the beginning of the next fiscal year (July1).

If the proposal is initiated by a majority of the governing board of each affected district and the territory proposed for transfer is less than ten percent of the territory of the transferring district, the proposal does not go to election.

Any action taken by the County Committee may be appealed to the California State Board of Education (SBE).

The process is slightly different for community college districts and involves the Chancellor's Office and

the Board of Governors instead of the SBE.

Q. What is the process for proposing a unification action?

- A. Like a transfer of territory, an action to unify a school district(s) is initiated by the submission to the County Committee of a petition that has been determined to be sufficient and signed as required by law. The signature requirements are the same as those for a transfer of territory.

After the County Committee has studied the proposal and held hearings on the matter in each of the affected school districts, it prepares a series of findings, a recommendation, and a unification plan for submission to the SBE. The SBE approves or denies the petition and plan. If approved, the proposal goes to an election in territory selected by the SBE. The SBE cannot be bypassed.

Q. What is the process for proposing a formation action?

- A. Like a unification, an action to form a school district(s) is initiated by the submission of a petition that has been determined to be sufficient and signed as required by law by the County Committee. The signature requirements are the same as those for a unification action.

After the County Committee has studied the proposal and held hearings on the matter in each of the affected school districts, it prepares a series of findings, a recommendation, and a plan for submission to the SBE. The SBE approves or denies the petition and plan. If approved, the proposal goes to an election in territory selected by the SBE. The SBE cannot be bypassed.

Q. What is the County Committee's role in relation to the number of trustees or governing board members and the manner by which they are elected?

- A. Except in a school district governed by a board of education provided for in the charter of a city, the County Committee has the power to establish or abolish trustee areas; rearrange the boundaries of trustee areas; increase or decrease the number of members of the governing board of a school district; and adopt an alternative method of electing governing board members. Board members can be elected by the registered voters of the entire district and reside anywhere in the district ("at-large" method); be elected by the registered voters of the entire district but reside in a trustee area ("trustee area" method); or be elected by the registered voters of the trustee area in which they reside ("ward" method).

Any request for such an action may be initiated by the County Committee, a petition of the qualified electors in a district, or a resolution of the governing board of a district. At the conclusion of hearings held within the district, the County Committee approves or disapproves the proposal. Approval constitutes an Order of Election; denial terminates the proposal.

If the matter goes to election, the voters determine the final outcome of the proposal.

Q. What are the requirements for a petition?

- A. To request a petition to reorganize a school or community college district, any citizen or school or community college district must write a letter to the Secretary of the County Committee (Kenneth M. Young, County Superintendent of Schools). The letter should include a statement of what is proposed, the names of the districts affected, a list of the reasons for such proposal, and a map and boundary description of the area involved. The Secretary will provide the format for the petition. The number of signatures required for a valid petition varies depending upon the type of action proposed.

Q. Can the County Committee be bypassed?

A. Any proposal to reorganize a school district must be considered by the County Committee for public hearing(s) and decision or recommendation. The County Committee is readily accessible through the Secretary's designee, Rollin Edmunds (redmunds@rcoe.us , or 951-826-6674).

Q. Where is the specific authority for the County Committee?

A. Authorization for the County Committee and its actions can be found in the California Education Code Sections 4000, et seq. and 35500, et.seq., and the California Administrative Code, Title V.