

# Guide for Preparation of Ballot Measure Initial Arguments and Rebuttals

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[California Elections Code Division 9, Chapter 3, Article 4](#) allows for initial and rebuttal arguments in favor of and against city measures.

## INITIAL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF OR AGAINST A MEASURE

For all measures, the initial argument (in favor of or against the measures) shall not exceed 300 words in length. The use of the standard word count outlined in [Elections Code section 9](#) shall be followed and is included in this guide.

Authors shall use the City's official electronic Initial Argument Form provided by the Office of the City Clerk. This form shall contain the text of the initial argument electronically submitted and also must be printed and wet signed by each author who shall provide their name, title, and voter registration address. The initial argument shall not exceed five author signatures ([California Elections Code section 9283](#)).

## SELECTION OF ARGUMENTS

For initiative measures placed on the ballot, the person(s) filing the initiative petition, along with anyone eligible to vote on the measure, or bona fide association of citizens, or any combination of voters and associations, may file an initial written argument in favor of the measure. The city council, or any council member(s) authorized by the city council, or charter officer, or department director, or any individual eligible to vote on the measure, or bona fide association of citizens, or any combination of voters and associations, may submit an initial argument against the measure. If more than one argument is submitted against the measure, the city elections official (City Clerk) shall select one of the arguments and give preference and priority to the arguments in the same order established under [California Elections Code section 9287](#) and [Sacramento City Code 1.16.070\(B\)](#). If the city council, or any council member(s) authorized by the city council, submits an initial argument against an initiative measure, only one authorized member's signature is necessary to afford the legislative body priority in argument selection.

For city council measures placed on the ballot, the city council, or any council member(s) authorized by the city council, or anyone eligible to vote on the measure, or charter officer, or department director, or bona fide association of citizens, or any combination of voters and associations, may file a written initial argument for or against the measure. If the city council, or any council member(s) authorized by the city council, submits a written argument in favor of or against a measure, only one authorized member's signature is necessary to afford the legislative body priority in argument selection pursuant to [California Elections Code section 9287](#).

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Priority for the selection of author of the initial argument against the measure is as follows:

- (a) The legislative body, or member or members of the legislative body authorized by that body.
- (b) The individual voter, or bona fide association of citizens, or combination of voters and associations, who are the bona fide sponsors or proponents of the measure.
- (c) Bona fide associations of citizens.\*
- (d) Individual voters who are eligible to vote on the measure.

\* In order to enable the City Clerk to determine whether it qualifies as a bona fide association of citizens, an organization or association submitting an initial argument in favor of or against a city measure shall submit with its argument a copy of one of the following :

- (a) Its articles of incorporation, articles of association, partnership documents, bylaws, or similar documents.
- (b) Letterhead containing the name of the organization and its principal officers.
- (c) If the organization or association is a primarily formed committee established to support or oppose the measure, its statement of organization filed pursuant to [Section 84101 of the Government Code](#).

## REBUTTALS TO INITIAL ARGUMENTS

Rebuttal arguments are accepted only when initial arguments in favor of and against a measure are submitted. Only authors of the initial arguments may author the rebuttal arguments, unless authorship has been relinquished. No rebuttal argument shall exceed 250 words in length. The use of the standard word count outlined in [Elections Code section 9](#) shall be followed and is included in this guide.

Authors shall use the City's official electronic Rebuttal Argument Form provided by the Office of the City Clerk. This form shall contain the text of the rebuttal argument electronically submitted and also must be printed and wet signed by each author who shall provide their name, title, and voter registration address. The rebuttal argument shall not exceed five author signatures ([California Elections Code section 9285](#)).

## SIGNATURE RELINQUISHMENT

The author(s) of an initial argument shall remain the author(s) of any applicable rebuttal argument. If an author wishes to relinquish their authorship of a rebuttal argument to another author, a Relinquishment of Author Status form provided by the Office of the City Clerk shall be submitted. Alternate authors are required to meet the same eligibility criteria as required to author the initial argument in favor of or against a measure.

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## SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Initial and rebuttal argument submissions are due to the Office of the City Clerk no later than 4:30 p.m. on the due date. Submission is required both electronically and in person at the Office of the City Clerk located at 915 I Street, New City Hall, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Scheduling an appointment for submission of argument materials is strongly recommended and can be done by contacting [clerk@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:clerk@cityofsacramento.org) or (916) 808-5442. Additionally, as checking in with the City Hall Security Desk is a requirement when visiting the Office of the City Clerk, it is recommended that adequate time be allotted for such when submitting argument materials.

## PUBLIC ACCESS AND EXAMINATION

Initial and rebuttal arguments are available for public examination for 10-calendar days following the filing deadline. During the 10-calendar-day public examination period, any voter of the jurisdiction in which the election is being held, or the elections official (the City Clerk), may seek a writ of mandate or an injunction requiring any or all of the materials to be amended or deleted ([California Elections Code section 9190](#)). The writ of mandate or injunction request may be filed with the Sacramento Superior Court.

## FORMAT OF INITIAL ARGUMENTS AND REBUTTALS

Printed arguments shall be titled either “Argument In Favor of Measure \_\_\_” or “Argument Against Measure\_\_\_,” ([California Elections Code section 9282](#)). Initial and rebuttal arguments shall be typewritten in block paragraph style on the City’s official Argument Form provided by the Office of the City Clerk. Text shall be of uniform size and darkness, and with uniform spacing.

Therefore, authors may not use:

- Underlining (including publication names or titles referenced).
- ALL CAPS (exceptions allowed for YES or NO; for example, Vote NO on Measure Q).
- Any form of emphasis such as *italics*, **bold print**, dashes (-), bullets (●) stars (\*), etc.
- Multiple punctuation (e.g. “.....” or “-----“or “!!!!!!”).
- Emoji or emoticons.
- Indents; all paragraphs will be left justified.

The use of any quotations or endorsements in the submitted argument requires the submission of associated documentation. If the argument contains the name of an endorsee, written approval from that individual or association authorizing the use of their name must be submitted with the argument form. If a quote is used a signed statement from the person who was quoted in the argument must be submitted.

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## STANDARD WORD COUNT

**(300 words for Initial Arguments / 250 words for Rebuttal Arguments)**

[Elections Code section 9\(a\)](#) Counting of words, for purposes of this code, shall be as follows:

1. Punctuation is not counted.
2. Each word shall be counted as one word except as specified in this section.
3. All proper nouns, including geographical names, shall be considered as one word; for example, "City of Sacramento" shall be counted as one word.
4. Each abbreviation for a word, phrase, or expression shall be counted as one word.
5. Hyphenated words that appear in any generally available standard reference dictionary, published in the United States at any time within the 10 calendar years immediately preceding the election for which the words are counted, including a generally available standard reference dictionary published online, shall be considered as one word. Each part of all other hyphenated words shall be counted as a separate word.
6. Dates shall be counted as one word.
7. Any number consisting of a digit or digits shall be considered as one word. Any number which is spelled, such as "one," shall be considered as a separate word or words. "One" shall be counted as one word whereas "one hundred" shall be counted as two words. "100" shall be counted as one word.
8. Telephone numbers shall each be counted as one word.
9. Internet website addresses (including email addresses) shall be counted as one word.

Initial and rebuttal arguments that are not in compliance with the formatting guidelines above shall be reformatted by the City Clerk. Initial arguments and rebuttals that exceed the allotted word count shall be shortened by removing words from the end of the argument text until the word limit is reached.

The City Clerk bears no responsibility for the corrected format of initial and rebuttal arguments under these circumstances.

Additional information regarding measure arguments and rebuttals may be obtained via the [City Clerk's website](#) or by contacting the Office of the City Clerk at (916) 808-5442 or via email at [clerk@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:clerk@cityofsacramento.org).