

CITY OF FRESNO COUNCIL AND MAYOR RESIDENCY ACT



June 13, 2019

The following policies are enacted to help ensure that candidates for Mayor and City Council, and incumbents reside in the district they will or do represent, or the City in the case of the Mayor.

ARTICLE I DEFINITIONS

At Large Municipal Elections

In at-large elections, all voters can vote for all seats up for election. At-large elections allow a simple majority of the voters to elect all of the seats in a local election. This can result in disenfranchisement of the local electorate and elected bodies not in compliance with applicable law. Prior to 1981, City Council seats in Fresno were contested in at large elections.

City

"City" means the City of Fresno, a municipal corporation.

District Municipal Elections

A jurisdiction is divided into districts and one member is elected per district. Only the voters in a specific City Council district may vote for City Council candidates in that district.

Fresno City Charter Section 304

This Charter Section provides that no person shall be eligible to hold an elective office unless that person is, and has been for a period of at least 30 days immediately preceding the filing of nomination papers for such office or appointment of such office, a resident of the City, and has been at the time of assuming such office, an elector of the City.

Fresno City Charter Section 304.1

City of Fresno Charter Section 304.1 took effect on all municipal elections after 1981. It provides that no person shall be eligible to hold elective office as a Councilmember unless that person is, and has been for a period of at least thirty days immediately preceding the filing of nomination papers for such office or appointment to such office, a resident within the Council district corresponding in number to the office to which that person is elected or appointed.

Municipal Ordinance

A Municipal Ordinance is a law of local application. Local ordinances are adopted by the City Council and enforced by the City Manager and staff of local government.

Voting Rights Act of 1965

The National Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discriminatory voting practices for the widespread disenfranchisement of minorities in the United States. The Act established extensive federal oversight of elections administration, providing that states and local governments with a history of discriminatory voting practices could not implement any change affecting voting without first obtaining the approval of the Department of Justice, a process known as preclearance.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE OF ACT

Prior to 1981, there was a concern that some citizens of Fresno did not have a Councilmember to properly represent their district. There was also a potential violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent election laws governing citizen representation. This issue was finally decided by the voters in a ballot issue.

On May 31, 1977, the voters of Fresno amended Charter Section 304 to require that persons running for City municipal elections must live in the City for a period of at least 30 days immediately preceding the filing of nomination papers for City offices and live in the City at the time of assuming office.

The voters of Fresno also added Charter Section 304.1 to require that persons running for City Council seats must reside in the district at the time the nomination papers are filed for such office or appointment. It further provided that each Councilmember shall, during the Councilmember's term, reside within such Council district. This was strictly a residency requirement and elections continued to be held at large. On June 3, 1980, the voters amended Charter Section 304.1 to provide that each Councilmember must reside in, and be elected from the district corresponding in number to his/her office. Thus, only the electors from the district could vote for the Councilmember within such district.

Candidates please take note, if all of the requirements of this Act are not timely and fully met, the City Clerk shall not allow the candidate's name to appear on the ballot.

Objectives of Act:

1. To provide stricter and more detailed criteria for establishing a Council candidate's residency in the Council district, and to provide detailed criteria for establishing a Mayoral candidate's residency in the City. Developing structured, objective criteria will help ensure proof of district residency for Council and City residency for Mayoral candidates.
2. To provide stricter and more detailed criteria for establishing current Councilmembers' residency in the districts they represent during their term in office. Developing structured, objective criteria will help ensure proof of district residency during the entire term of a Councilmember.
3. To protect the interests of all Fresno citizens and ensure proper representation by developing policies that will help ensure that the Councilmembers truly reside in the district they represent, and within the City limits in the case of the Mayor.
4. Adopt enabling legislation via a municipal resolution to establish necessary policies.

Accomplishing the above stated objectives will help ensure that both the letter and spirit of Charter Section 304.1 can be implemented as Fresno voters intended when they passed the ballot measure 30 years ago.

ARTICLE III ADVANTAGES OF DISTRICT REPRESENTATION

There are compelling reasons for establishing district representation. The Voter Rights Act of 1965 was the legislative vehicle for eliminating discriminatory voting qualifications, standards, practices, and procedures. The advantages of district elections include:

1. It encourages personal campaigns;
2. It encourages attention to neighborhood concerns;
3. It is easier for new candidates to win;
4. There is a lower cost of campaigning; and
5. It enhances descriptive representation and shared policy views and ideology.

Candidates not in compliance with the residency requirements of Charter Section 304.1 undermine the legal principles of representative local elections and raise questions regarding a local election's compliance with applicable law.

ARTICLE IV RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR COUNCIL AND MAYORAL CANDIDATES

In addition to providing the Fresno County Clerk proof of voter registration in the district residence claimed for running for a City Council seat, or in the City if running for Mayor. In addition, a candidate must provide the following information to the Fresno City Clerk to demonstrate the candidate resided at the specified address at least 30 days prior to filing nomination papers:

1. Proof of home ownership as evidenced by: 1) a copy of a grant deed, a mortgage payment billing statement verifying the address; or any other document that can verify home ownership and residency of the property; and 2) evidence of a homeowner's property tax exemption filed with the Fresno County Assessor for proof that the home is the primary residence. If candidates do not have a tax exemption on file they must submit an affidavit signed by the candidate verifying that the home is the candidate's primary residence; or

If the home ownership is in the name of a person other than the candidate, or in the name of a legal entity, such as a trust, partnership, or corporation, the candidate must submit an affidavit signed by the homeowner or authorized legal representative of the entity verifying that candidate is living in the home as his or her primary residence; or

If the residence is rented or leased by the candidate, the candidate will provide proof of residency by providing a signed copy of a current and legally enforceable lease or rental agreement. If the lease or rental agreement expiration date is less than 90 days from the date of filing nomination papers, the candidate shall provide a letter from the property manager or property owner verifying that the candidate is continuing on a month-to-month basis; or

If a candidate is living at a residence without a lease or rental agreement and whose name otherwise does not appear in the proof of home ownership,

candidate must have landlord or property owner sign an affidavit, under penalty of perjury, verifying candidate's residency in landlord's or property owner's property; and

2. Proof of motor vehicle registration, if any motor vehicles are registered to the candidate for the residency claimed, or proof of a valid California driver's license or State of California issued identification card showing the address matches the address shown on the candidate's nomination papers. If a candidate does not own an automobile or does not have a California driver's license or State issued identification card, or if the address on the vehicle registration, driver's license, or identification card does not match the address on the candidate's nomination papers, the candidate must update the address and show proof of the change on at least one of the documents described in this paragraph. If the residence address on the driver's license, identification card or auto registration is in the process of being changed, the candidate must provide a document from the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV14 form) verifying the change is in process.; and
3. A PG&E bill or Fresno City Utility bill in the candidate's name on the company's letterhead showing that the service address is consistent with the address in candidate's nomination papers. In the event a PG&E and/or Fresno City Utility bill has not been generated, a letter from an authorized representative of the utility provider on the company's letterhead stating that an account exists and has been active for a period of at least 30 days in the candidate's name will suffice. If there is an agreement with a landlord or other legal entity, as verified by a rental contract or lease contract, that the landlord or other legal entity will pay the PG&E bill and/or the Fresno Utility bill, the candidate must submit an affidavit signed by the landlord or the other legal entity's authorized legal representative verifying that the landlord or other legal entity, is responsible for paying the PG&E bill and/or the Fresno City Utility bill.
4. The candidate must sign an affidavit, in a form approved by the City Clerk and City Attorney under penalty of perjury, verifying residency.

Failure to provide any of the above-required documents on or before the closing date to file nomination papers will disqualify a candidate from meeting the Charter Section 304 or 304.1 residency requirement. Willfully submitting false, forged, altered documents or coercing or unduly influencing persons providing affidavit documents will also disqualify candidates and constitute a misdemeanor Charter violation in addition to any other legal remedy available to enforce a similar fraudulent act.

ARTICLE V VERIFYING RESIDENCY AND CERTIFICATION FOR COUNCIL AND MAYORAL CANDIDATES

No earlier than the initial filing date for documents related to a candidate running for a City Council seat or for the office of Mayor, and no later than the closing date to file nomination papers, candidates are required to file all of the documents specified in Article IV above with the Fresno City Clerk's office for verification. The City Clerk will

review and verify that all required information is correct and meets the requirements of this Act. The City Clerk will diligently work to review and verify all residency documents submitted. No later than five calendar days from receipt of the candidate's documents, the City Clerk's office shall complete the review and verification of the documents. The City Clerk will then do one of the following:

1. If all City residency requirements are satisfied pursuant to this Act, the City Clerk's office will provide a letter to the Fresno County Clerk's office and to the candidate certifying that the candidate has met the City's residency requirements; or
2. If any deficiencies are discovered in the documents provided or certain documents are missing, the City Clerk's office will provide a letter to the candidate showing the specific deficiencies or missing document(s). The candidate will have until the closing date to file nomination papers to correct the deficiencies and re-submit the required documents for verification to the City Clerk; or
3. If the candidate either fails to complete verification of all of the requirements of this Act within the prescribed time limits, or the resubmitted documents do not meet the requirements of the Act, the City Clerk's office will provide a letter to the candidate advising him or her of the failure to meet the requirements of the Act and shall not certify to the County Clerk the candidate has met the residency requirements, and the candidate shall not appear on the ballot; or
4. If the re-submitted documents by the candidate meet all requirements of this Act, the City Clerk's office will certify the Act's residency requirements have been met and provide a letter to the Fresno County Clerk's office and to the candidate.

ARTICLE VI VERIFYING RESIDENCY FOR INCUMBENTS

Councilmembers are required to live in the district they represent during the entire term in office, and the Mayor is required to live in the City limits during the entire term in office. To insure that incumbents continue to live in the district/City they represent, each incumbent must submit the following documents to the City Clerk during the last 31 calendar days of the year (December 1st to 31st), at the end of each year in office:

1. In the event that an incumbent moved to a new residence in the district/City after the filing of the previous affidavit, the incumbent must confirm the new address, within 60 days of moving, by providing the documents listed in items 1 through 5 under Article IV, to the City Clerk.
2. Incumbents who have not relocated since the information required by this Article was last provided may comply with this Article by supplying a copy of a current driver's license or California State issued identification card and an affidavit that they have not relocated and all previously supplied information remains true and correct.

Failure to provide any of the above-required documents on or before the end of the year shall disqualify an incumbent from meeting the Charter Section 304 or 304.1 residency requirement. Willfully submitting false, forged, altered documents or coercing or unduly influencing persons providing affidavit documents will also disqualify a Councilmember or Mayor and constitute a misdemeanor Charter violation in addition to any other legal remedy available to enforce a similar fraudulent act.

ARTICLE VII INVESTIGATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Any fraudulent residency complaints shall be submitted to the City Attorney. The City Attorney will refer all complaints to the Fresno County District Attorney. The Fresno County District Attorney shall have the discretion to investigate residency complaints and if sufficient evidence of fraud is found during the investigation, the District Attorney can elect to prosecute.

ARTICLE VIII TRANSPARENCY

The City Clerk shall post the names and corresponding office sought, of all candidates that have been certified to meet the residency requirements of this Act on the City's website. Any confidential information shall be redacted before the public record is made available for inspection, in accordance with the Public Records Act. After the General Election the list shall be removed from the City website.

A PDF copy of this Act shall be available, year round, at the City's website and a hard copy shall be available to be picked up at the City Clerk's Office during normal business hours. This will enable prospective candidates to review residency requirements pursuant to this Act.

ARTICLE IX ONE YEAR REVIEW

One year from the adoption of this Amended Act, the Council shall, at a regularly scheduled meeting, review the implementation and practice of this Act and, if necessary, amend the Act to reflect required changes.

ARTICLE X EFFECTIVE DATE

This amended resolution shall take effect upon final passage. This Act, along with any subsequent amendments, shall be the Council and Mayor Residency Act of the City of Fresno.

Council Residency Act Amended ____-____-19