

MEASURE R - GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

THE QUESTION

Shall the measure to

- amend the City Charter to replace gender-specific language with gender neutral language, such as replacing words like "fireman" with "firefighters" and using gender-neutral pronouns in referring to City officers and staff,
- recognizing that women and non-binary persons as well as men are qualified for and hold such positions, and to avoid gender stereotyping and discrimination, and promote inclusivity be adopted?



THE SITUATION

The Oakland City Charter now incorporates gender-specific language to refer to City officers and staff. The Charter, for example, refers to firemen and uses male and female pronouns.

THE PROPOSAL

Measure R would authorize replacing the current language with gender-neutral language in all references to City officers and staff. The proposed Charter, for example, would refer to firefighters rather than firemen and would use the gender-neutral pronouns they, their/s and them rather than any variations of he/she/his/hers/him/her. For example, Section 200 of the Charter would read in part: The Mayor shall not be a member of the Council, but they shall have a vote on the Council if the councilmembers are evenly divided.

This measure would also delete Charter Articles XIV and XV pertaining to obsolete retirement systems for police and firefighters respectively. These retirement systems were combined in one system, the Police and Fire Retirement System (Charter Article XXVI) when Article XXVI was enacted.

FISCAL EFFECT

This measure will have little, if any, fiscal impact.



REASONS TO SUPPORT

- Using gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language supports the City's commitment to inclusivity and representation.
- Measure R would change the Charter to reflect the current diverse makeup of the City's staff and the full spectrum of their gender identities including transgender, nonbinary, intersex among others.
- The proposed changes would align Oakland with the professional guidelines from the League of California cities and with state policies and legislation.



REASONS TO OPPOSE

No formal opposition was publicly available as of the date of publication.



A YES VOTE MEANS

Oakland would revise its Charter's language to be gender-neutral

A NO VOTE MEANS

Oakland would not revise the Charter and the Charter would retain its current gender-specific language.