Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS
Gail Pellerin, Chair
AB 1923 (Soria) – As Amended August 3, 2026

**INFORMATIONAL HEARING ONLY – NO VOTE TO BE TAKEN**

**SUBJECT**: Local ballot measures: County of Fresno.

**SUMMARY**: Requires any Fresno County initiative measure determined to have enough valid signatures to qualify for the ballot on or before July 8, 2026, to be submitted to the voters at the November 3, 2026, statewide general election. Specifically, **this bill**:

1) Requires any Fresno County initiative petition that has been certified as sufficient by the Fresno County Registrar of Voters on or before July 8, 2026, to be submitted, without alteration, to the voters at the November 3, 2026, statewide general election. Requires the Fresno County Registrar of Voters and the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to perform all acts that they would otherwise perform to place a qualified initiative measure on the ballot.

2) Makes findings and declarations that a special statute is necessary because of the unique fiscal circumstances facing the County of Fresno arising from the expiration of its local transportation tax.

3) Contains an urgency clause, allowing this bill to take effect immediately upon enactment.

**EXISTING LAW**:

1) Provides that the initiative is the power of the electors to propose statutes and amendments to the Constitution and to adopt or reject them. Permits initiative powers to be exercised by the electors of each city or county under procedures that the Legislature shall provide. (California Constitution, Article II, §§8, 11)

2) Permits county ordinances to be enacted by the initiative process. (Elections Code §§9100 et seq.)

3) Permits the board of supervisors, during the circulation of a petition for a county initiative measure or before taking action to adopt such an initiative or submit it to the voters, to refer the proposed measure to a county agency or agencies for a report on any or all of the following:

   a) Its fiscal impact.

   b) Its effect on the internal consistency of the county's general and specific plans, as specified.

   c) Its effect on the use of land, the impact on the availability and location of housing, and the ability of the county to meet its regional housing needs.

d) Its impact on funding for infrastructure, including a discussion of whether the measure would be likely to result in increased infrastructure costs or savings to residents and businesses.

e) Its impact on the community's ability to attract and retain business and employment.

f) Its impact on the uses of vacant parcels of land.

g) Its impact on agricultural lands, open space, traffic congestion, existing business districts, and developed areas designated for revitalization.

h) Any other matters the board of supervisors requests to be in the report. (Elections Code §9111(a))

4) Requires a report ordered by a board of supervisors pursuant to 3) above to be presented to the board no later than 30 days after the county elections official certifies to the board that the petition for the initiative contains enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. (Elections Code §9111(b))

5) Requires the county elections official, when a county initiative petition is filed by proponents, to determine the total number of signatures affixed to the petition and, if the total number of signatures equals or exceeds the number needed for the initiative to qualify for the ballot, to determine if the petition is signed by the requisite number of registered voters for the initiative to qualify, as specified. Requires the elections official, if the number of valid signatures on the petition is sufficient for the initiative to qualify, to certify that fact to the board of supervisors at its next regular board meeting. (Elections Code §§9113, 9114, 9115)

6) Requires the county board of supervisors, when a county elections official certifies that the petition for a county initiative measure contains enough valid signatures for the initiative to qualify for the ballot, to do one of the following three things:

   a) Adopt the ordinance, without alteration, at the regular meeting at which the certification of the petition is presented, or within 10 days thereafter.

   b) Submit the ordinance, without alteration, to the voters, as specified.

   c) Order a report from one or more county agencies on the initiative, as described above in 3), at the regular meeting at which the certification of the petition is presented. Upon receipt of the report, the board must then either adopt the initiative within 10 days or submit it to the voters. (Elections Code §9118)

7) Requires the election for a qualified county initiative to be held at the next statewide election that is at least 88 days after the election is ordered by the board of supervisors, unless the board calls a special election for the measure to be held prior to that statewide election. (Elections Code §1405)

**FISCAL EFFECT**: None. This bill is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS**:

1) **Informational Hearing**: The committee is discussing the subject matter of this bill today as an informational item, as the bill is currently pending in the Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee, and is not in the possession of this committee. No vote will be taken on this bill at this committee hearing.

2) **Purpose of the Bill**: According to the author:

   In 1986, Fresno County voters approved Measure C, a half-cent sales tax to fund transportation projects. Measure C has invested more than $2.1 billion into improvements to local roads, making local highways safer and more efficient, transportation services for rural communities and seniors, and more. However, after 40 years of supporting Fresno County Transportation infrastructure and services, authorization for Measure C will end unless it is renewed by a new voter approved initiative.

   To continue the benefits provided by Measure C, over 32,000 Fresno County residents signed petitions to qualify the Fresno County Transportation Improvement Act (FCTIA) initiative for the November 2026 ballot. Despite meeting the signature threshold, three county supervisors voted to delay the measure until March 2028 by ordering a 30-day study of the initiative instead of submitting it to voters for consideration. This procedural delay will likely cause the measure to miss the November ballot deadline by just one business day. AB 1923 will prevent this misuse of the County's authority from withholding this important initiative from the ballot.

3) **Local Initiative Reports**: Under existing state law, when an elections official determines that a petition for a county or city initiative measure contains enough valid signatures to qualify for the ballot, the elections official must certify that fact to the applicable governing body (either the board of supervisors or the city council). Once the governing body receives that certification, it has three options: (1) adopt the initiative measure in its entirety, in which case the measure does not appear on the ballot; (2) submit the measure to the voters at the next regularly scheduled election in the jurisdiction that is at least 88 days away; or (3) direct one or more local agencies to prepare a report on the proposed initiative. Ordering a report can extend the amount of time the governing body has before it must decide whether to adopt the initiative or submit it to the voters.

   The option to order a report on a local initiative measure—and thereby delay the governing body's decision on whether to adopt the measure or place it on the ballot—was established by AB 2202 (Chacon), Chapter 767, Statutes of 1987. According to the Assembly Floor Analysis of that bill, the purpose of this provision was to provide information about the effects of a proposed initiative "while the city or county still has the option to enact the initiative by local legislation."

   Although a report on the effects of a proposed initiative may assist a governing body in deciding whether to adopt the measure outright or submit it to the voters, there are circumstances in which the governing body does not have the legal authority to adopt the initiative. In those cases, the governing body's only option is to submit the measure to the voters.

For example, a local initiative that would amend or repeal an initiative that previously was approved by voters cannot be adopted by the governing body unless the earlier initiative expressly permits such action. Similarly, the California Constitution generally prohibits a local government from imposing or extending a tax without voter approval. As a result, when a local initiative proposes to impose or extend a tax, the governing body cannot adopt the measure outright; it must submit the measure to the voters.

When a governing body lacks the authority to adopt an initiative outright, ordering a report on the measure cannot inform its decision of whether to adopt the initiative, because that option is unavailable. The report may still provide useful information, but its primary value in those circumstances is to inform voters rather than to assist the governing body in deciding whether to adopt the measure or refer it to voters. In such circumstances, the rationale for delaying the referral of the measure to the voters while awaiting the preparation of the report is less clear, since the report will still be completed and available to voters well in advance of the election at which they will consider the measure.

4) **Fresno County Transportation Measure**: In January 2026, registered voters in Fresno County submitted a proposed county initiative measure to the Fresno County Registrar of Voters that would enact a county ordinance imposing a one-half percent (0.5%) transactions and use tax (TUT) for 30 years to fund transportation projects. Fresno County's existing transportation TUT, originally approved by the voters as Measure C in 1986 and extended by the voters through another Measure C in 2006, is scheduled to expire at the end of June 2027.

   The initiative's proponents submitted the petition to the Registrar of Voters in April 2026. On July 8, 2026, the registrar determined that the petition contained enough valid signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot. Because the initiative would impose a tax, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors did not have the legal authority to adopt the ordinance outright. Instead, the board's only option under state law is to submit the measure to the voters.

   The Board of Supervisors received the registrar's certification at its July 14, 2026, meeting. Had the board voted at that meeting to place the measure on the ballot, state law would require it to appear on the November 2026 statewide general election ballot. Instead, the board voted 3-2 to direct one or more county agencies to prepare a report on the proposed initiative. Under existing law, that report is due by August 13, 2026.

   Once the board receives the report, it will still have no legal option other than to submit the initiative to the voters. However, the statutory deadline for placing a local measure on the November 2026 statewide general election ballot is August 7, 2026. Because the report is not due until after that deadline, and because the board’s next regularly scheduled meeting is also after that deadline, the board is not expected to place the measure on the November 2026 ballot. Unless a special election is called, the initiative instead would appear before the voters at the 2028 statewide primary election.

This bill would require the initiative to be submitted to Fresno County voters at this year's statewide general election.

Nothing in this bill prevents the Fresno County agencies from preparing or releasing the report ordered by the Board of Supervisors. The report could still be completed, provided to the board, and made available to the public in advance of the election. Because state law requires the report to be completed by August 13, 2026, it would be available at least 82 days before the November 2026 statewide general election, giving voters ample opportunity to consider its findings before casting their ballots.

5) **Arguments in Support**: In support of this bill, Streets for All writes:

> Fresno County's current local transportation sales tax, Measure C, expires in 2027. Without voter approval of a successor measure, the county risks losing a significant source of funding for transportation investments. Although the Better Roads Safe Streets initiative qualified for the ballot through the citizen initiative process, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors instead ordered a report on the measure that could delay consideration until after the deadline to place it on the November 2026 ballot. AB 1923 ensures that a duly qualified initiative is submitted to the voters at the earliest statewide general election.
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> The Better Roads Safe Streets initiative would provide dedicated funding for transportation improvements throughout Fresno County, including road maintenance, multimodal street improvements, Safe Routes to School, and public transportation. These investments advance the goals of creating safer, more connected, and more sustainable transportation networks for all Californians.

6) **Arguments in Opposition**: In opposition to this bill, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors writes:

> This measure is anti-process and sets a terrible precedent to circumvent local authority for the purpose of placing a specific item, which failed a random sample initial signature review, on the November 2026 ballot. AB 1923 also eliminates the request of a study called for by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to review a tax that will generate over $7 billion of taxpayer dollars over the next 30 years.
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> The current process, followed by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, ensures fair and open elections. Local decisions are best left to local elected officials, who answer to the constituents they represent. AB 1923 circumvents local authority, handing that power to the State of California.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION**:

**Support**

Another Level Training Academy

California Conference of Carpenters
California Environmental Voters
California Faculty Association Fresno
Central Labor Council, Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings Counties, AFL-CIO
Central Valley Community Foundation
Central Valley Partnership
Citizens Climate Lobby, Fresno Chapter
City of Fresno Professional Employees Association
Cultiva LA Salud
Every Neighborhood Partnership
Faith in the Valley
Familias En Accion
Fresno Building Healthy Communities
Fresno Mayors
Fresno State Center for Community Voices
Fresno Unified School District
Fresno, Madera, Tulare, Kings Counties, Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Friends of Calwa
Highway City Community Development
Jakara Movement
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability
League of Women Voters of Fresno
Live Again Fresno
Masumoto Farms
Medical Advocates for Healthy Air
Mothers Helping Mothers
North Coast States Carpenters Union
Planned Parenthood Advocates Mar Monte
Regenerate California Innovation
State Center Community College District
Saint Rest Baptist Church
SEIU 521
SEIU California
State Center Federation of Teachers
Streets for All
The Children's Movement Fresno
Youth Leadership Institute
5 individuals

**Opposition**

Fresno County Board of Supervisors

**Analysis Prepared by**: Ethan Jones / ELECTIONS / (916) 319-2094