CALIFORNIA BOND CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES

A **California Citizens' Oversight Committee (COC)** is a volunteer local committee established to provide public oversight of voter-approved local school or community college bond expenditures. Under California Education Code § 15278, when a bond measure authorized under Proposition 39 is approved, the governing board of the school district or community college district must establish and appoint an independent Citizens' Oversight Committee within 60 days after the election results are entered into the board's minutes.

1. What is a Citizens' Oversight Committee?

The COC is a community-based body intended to provide transparency and accountability concerning the expenditure of bond proceeds. It is independent of the district, and its members are drawn from specified segments of the community. The committee does not manage the bond program, select project prioritization or replace the governing board; rather, it reviews and reports on whether bond funds are being spent appropriately and in accordance with the purposes, the Project List, approved by voters.

2. What are its purposes?

The principal purpose of the COC is to inform the public about the expenditure of bond revenues and to actively review and report on the proper expenditure of taxpayers' money for school construction. The COC also advises the public regarding the district's compliance with Proposition 39 requirements. Specifically, the committee is responsible for providing oversight to help ensure that:

- Bond revenues are used only for the purposes authorized by the voters, such as construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or replacement of school facilities and related property and equipment.
- Bond proceeds are not used for teacher or administrative salaries or other ordinary school operating expenses, subject to the limited exception for district employees performing administrative oversight work on authorized construction projects.
- The district's annual independent financial and performance audits are reviewed.
- School facilities and grounds may be inspected to determine whether bond revenues are being used appropriately.
- Deferred-maintenance plans and proposals may be reviewed.
- The district's efforts to maximize bond revenues through cost-saving measures may be reviewed.

The committee must operate publicly. Its proceedings are open to the public, and it must issue a report on its activities at least one time annually. Committee minutes, documents received, and reports issued are public records and must be made available on the district's website.

3. What is the required membership and term of service?

A COC must have at least seven members, who serve without compensation, typically for a term of 2-3 years. For a school district, the required membership includes:

- One member active in a business organization representing the local business community.
- One member active in a senior citizens' organization.
- One member active in a bona fide taxpayers' organization.
- One parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the district.
- One parent or guardian of an enrolled child who is also active in a parent-teacher organization, such as the PTA or schoolsite council.
- Two additional members selected from the public at large.

The committee may have more than seven members, but the required categories must be represented. District employees and officials, as well as district vendors, contractors, and consultants, may not serve on the committee. Members are also subject to applicable conflict-of-interest and incompatible-office restrictions.

4. How are members recruited and appointed?

The district governing board has the legal authority to appoint the committee members. State law requires the board to establish and appoint the committee, but it does not prescribe one uniform statewide application or recruitment process. Districts typically publicize vacancies, solicit applications or nominations from the required community organizations, review applications, and recommend qualified candidates to the governing board.

In sum, a California Citizens' Oversight Committee is a statutorily required public accountability mechanism for Proposition 39 school and community college bonds. Its central role is to provide an independent community perspective on bond expenditures, promote transparency, review financial and performance information, and report to the public on whether bond proceeds are being used for the purposes approved by voters.

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