

**RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD  
OF THE COTATI-ROHNERT PARK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Resolution 1920-10 to Initiate a Transition to a By-Trustee Area Election System  
Commencing with the 2020 Governing Board Election and Statement of Intent to Seek a  
Waiver of the Election Requirement from the State Board of Education**

WHEREAS, the Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District Board of Education (“Board”) is keenly aware of the importance of maintaining a fair election system;

WHEREAS, the Board has always strived to listen to all voices in the community and represent all of our community;

WHEREAS, California Education Code sections 5019(a) & (c)(1) and 5030 authorizes the Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization (“County Committee”), upon application of a school district's governing board, to change the method of election of governing board members in a school district under its jurisdiction;

WHEREAS, the California Voting Rights Act (Elections Code §§ 14025 *et seq.*) (“CVRA”) prohibits the use of an "at-large" election system for governing board members of a school district if the “at-large” elections impair the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice, or its ability to influence the outcome of an election;

WHEREAS, Governing Board (“Board”) Members of the Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District (“District”) are currently elected using an “at-large” election system (i.e., election system in which registered voters of the entire jurisdiction elect candidates to the governing board);

WHEREAS, although the Board has not received a demand letter alleging that the Board’s at-large board member electoral system violates the CVRA and threatening litigation if the Board declines to voluntarily change to a district-based election system for electing board members, the Board has directed staff to initiate the process to establish “by-trustee areas” elections to avoid costs associated with receiving such a demand letter and potentially defending a lawsuit based on the CVRA even if that lawsuit were to reach a settlement in a timely manner;

WHEREAS, it is considered the view of the Board that starting with the 2020 Board elections, and with the benefit of federal Census data, the public interest will be better served by election of its Board members using a “by-trustee area” election system (i.e., elections in which one candidate residing in each trustee area is elected by only the registered voters in that particular trustee area);

WHEREAS, although Education Code section 5020 requires that a County Committee’s resolution approving a change in the method of electing governing board members be submitted to the electorate for its approval at the school district's next regular election, the Board intends to seek a waiver of the voter approval requirement as permitted by law. Education Code sections 33050-33053 authorize the State Board of Education to waive this voter approval requirement,



which could reduce the costs and risks associated with a school district's transition to a "by-trustee area" election system;

WHEREAS, the Board finds it is appropriate to seek a waiver of the election requirement in Education Code section 5020, and portions of sections 5019, 5021, and 5030, to ensure the timely implementation of the "by-trustee area" election system commencing with the 2020 Governing Board election, to reduce costs for the District associated with placing an item on the ballot and to reduce any potential legal liability or financial risk to the District under the CVRA;

WHEREAS, the adoption of "by-trustee area" elections will not affect the terms of any sitting Board members, each of whom will serve out his or her current term; and

WHEREAS, the Board, cognizant of its need for fiscal responsibility, desires to implement this change in the manner of electing Board members in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Governing Board of the Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District does hereby resolve, order and determine as follows:

1. The above recitals are true and correct.
2. The Board hereby determines that the trustee area boundary lines shall be developed based on federal Census data to provide for "by-trustee areas" elections commencing in 2020.
3. By this resolution, and pursuant to Education Code sections 5019(a) and 5030, the Board directs District staff, when appropriate, to transmit this resolution to the Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization to apply to have the County Committee adopt a change in the method of electing members of the board from "at-large" elections [Education Code section 5030(a)] to "by-trustee area" elections [Education Code section 5030(b)] commencing with the 2020 Board elections.
4. Before submitting a final proposal to the County Committee for a trustee area plan using the federal Census data, multiple public hearings shall be scheduled to obtain public input on the draft proposals prepared.
5. The Board shall apply to the County Committee for establishment of trustee areas pursuant to Education Code section 5019(a) in a timely manner to have the 2020 elections for the Board conducted within the new trustee areas.
6. The Superintendent, or his designee, shall send a copy of this resolution to the County Committee for action in accordance with law.
7. The Superintendent, or his designee, is hereby directed to prepare an additional Board resolution, and implement the applicable legal requirements in a timely manner, to seek a waiver from the State Board of Education of the election requirement imposed by Education Code section 5020.

8. The Superintendent, or his designee, shall consult with legal counsel to resolve all legal issues necessary to give effect to this resolution.

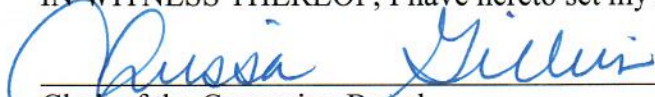
9. The foregoing resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

The foregoing resolution was introduced by Trustee Cimino who moved its adoption, and seconded by Trustee Gillies, and adopted on December 19, 2019, by the following vote:

Trustee Brown	<u>YES</u>
Trustee Cimino	<u>YES</u>
Trustee Gillies	<u>YES</u>
Trustee Nonn	<u>YES</u>
Trustee Wiltermood	<u>YES</u>

  
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President, Board of Trustees

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereto set my hand this 19th day of December 2019.

  
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Clerk of the Governing Board