

# PRESS-TELEGRAM

LOCAL NEWS

## Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia maintains perfect batting average, as voters approve all four charter amendments he backed

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Mayor Robert Garcia, a few months into his second term at the helm of Long Beach, has a perfect batting average on charter amendments.

This week, voters [resoundingly approved all four local measures](#) backed by Garcia and City Auditor Laura Doud, with at least 55 percent of the voters favoring each, according to semi-official election results. The sweep made Garcia eight-for-eight since he came to power in 2014 in getting measures he supported passed by voters.

“There is the sense in the city of Long Beach, we are heading in the right direction,” Garcia said Wednesday. “They trust us.”

But while the previous four dealt with shoring up the city’s finances, the four on the ballot Tuesday — Measures AAA, BBB, CCC and DDD — were touted as good-government reforms, creating ethics and redistricting commissions and clarifying Doud’s role as auditor.

Critics called the measures — in particular [Measure BBB, which redefined term limits](#) — a power grab by city officials, especially Garcia.

None of the opponents to the measures could be reached Wednesday. But in the arguments against each of the measures, the message was similar: the ballot items were not to be trusted.

“This measure is fatally flawed, a self-serving document written by politicians for politicians,” the argument against Measure CCC, which will create an ethics commission, read. “It does absolutely nothing to advance public trust in local government.”

The argument against the redistricting measure read: “A redistricting commission that is flawed at its core is not truly independent. It becomes nothing more than a scary power grab by the mayor and his rubber-stamping City Council.”

The voters apparently disagreed.

With 100 percent of precincts reporting, nearly 70 percent of them favored [Measure AAA](#), which clarified the auditor’s authority; [CCC](#) and [DDD](#), which will create the redistricting commission, each received close to 60 percent “yes” votes.

“The passage of this measure (AAA) is historically significant,” Doud said. “The Long Beach City Auditor’s Office was established in 1908, and I am grateful that our century-old charter is now up-to-date with modern, 21st century government auditing practices and standards.”

Even BBB, the most controversial, had 55 percent of voters favor it.

That measure would limit incumbents to three terms on the City Council, and appear on the ballot each time; under the current law, incumbents can only appear on the ballot twice — but can serve as many terms as they want, if they win as write-in candidates.

Garcia and others characterized the amendment as fixing a loophole

But opponents — including Long Beach resident and state Assemblyman Patrick O’Donnell, who easily won re-election to District 70 on Tuesday — argued that the loophole was intentional, put in place by voters in 1992.

And, last week, opponents released an analysis of the proposed law that argued because state law requires all term limit laws to be “prospective,” Measure BBB would entitle those currently in office to an additional three terms, rather than cap them at three total.

“Because new term limits cannot be applied retroactively,” the analysis, put out by the Long Beach Reform Coalition said, “an incumbent like Garcia could serve an additional three terms as mayor.”

But city officials disagreed with that notion.

On Wednesday, Deputy City Attorney Amy Webber said that the way the amendment was written, only those who served on the council prior to 1992 could run for three fresh terms.

“They’d probably need a walker,” Webber said.

Everyone currently on the council who has already won re-election once, could only run one more time under Measure BBB. Even Vice Mayor Dee Andrews, who is working on his third term — which he won in 2016 as a write-in; under the law, Webber said, Andrews could run again because the write-in win wouldn’t count.

Andrews — like Garcia — declined to say if he plans on running. But it did say he supports BBB.

“We’re not a little city, we’re a big city,” Andrews said, referring to other large cities, like Los Angeles, that also have three-term limits. “You should be able to serve three terms and when you’re done, move onto something else. You shouldn’t be able to run as a write-in for the rest of your life.”

Garcia, for his part, said voters had spoken. But, he added, all four measures we’re crafted well — citing government-reform nonprofit Common Cause’s description of Long Beach’s redistricting measure as the strongest in the nation.

“We know charter amendments can be complex,” Garcia said. “But these are good-government reform measures. I’m looking forward to implementing them