



How to Pass a **Local Sales Tax Measure** in Today's Political Environment



League of California Cities
2025 Annual Conference and Expo



CITY HALL

Meet the Panel



CALIFORNIA



Modesto

- Pop: 221,000
- 2 prior tries
- Stagnant economic growth
- \$100 M+ in deferred maintenance

CALIFORNIA



San Marcos

- Pop: 94,000
- Rapid growth
- 15 years of budget cuts
- Minimal service cuts so far
- Brand new City Manager

Tale of Two Cities



Modesto



San Marcos

Ballot Measure Planning



- ✓ Needs Identified
- ✓ Tax Rate
- ✓ Tracking Voter Survey
- ✓ Election Timing
- ✓ Political Landscape



- ✓ Non-Advocacy Communication
- ✓ Existing comms
- ✓ Informational mailers / digital ads
- ✓ Internal and external audiences
- ✓ Seek feedback
- ✓ Refine proposal
- ✓ Community readiness?



- ✓ Ballot Resolution/ Ordinance
- ✓ 75 words
- ✓ Projects & Programs
- ✓ Ballot Argument & Signers
- ✓ Official Vote (>88 days before Election)
- ✓ March 6 (Primary)*
- ✓ Aug 7 (General)*



- ✓ Volunteer leaders
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Website/Social
- ✓ Endorsements
- ✓ Grassroots
- ✓ Lawn Signs
- ✓ Mailers
- ✓ Digital Ads
- ✓ Get Out the Vote

Campaigns must be privately funded

Surveys



- Critical first step
- Professional approach, voter sample
- Test viability
- Identify effective messages
- Second survey approach
- Use the data



Building a Strong Foundation





Advocacy vs Education



Work with your City Attorney

“Own time, own dime”

Inform vs. persuade

Visuals matter too

Timing considerations



Road to the Ballot



Start Early





Engaging Stakeholders





**Campaigns =
Time + Energy**





Managing Expectations





Final Thoughts





Questions

