

## INFORMATIONAL BRIEF

### Using the Ethics Commission to Staff the Redistricting Commission

---

Kendrick Roberson, PhD, Pepperdine University

#### Core Question

The purpose of this brief is to address costs associated with using Ethics Commission Employees to staff the Los Angeles City Redistricting Commission.

#### Summary of Topline Findings

If the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission were to be placed fully in charge of redistricting efforts, there would be an approximate increase of approximately \$278,000, which would be used to contract out redistricting services. This would result in a commensurate decrease

- a. These services include redistricting research, community education, and mapping of demographics for both city council and LAUSD.
- b. Contracting is the preferred method because the redistricting commission for the City of Los Angeles currently only represents an unfunded portion of the proposed budget in the year immediately following the decennial census.

There are employees of the City Ethics Commission who have qualifications that could potentially allow them to supplant the Legislative Analysts from the Council Department as the Redistricting Commission Staff. If the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission's Ethics Officers were to replace the Council's Legislative Analysts on the Redistricting Commission, the would be close to no additional costs.

- c. I do not recommend replacing the Deputy City Attorneys on the Redistricting Commission staff at this time.

#### LOS ANGELES CITY REDISTRICTING COMMISSION FUNDING

At the state level, California has a redistricting Commission called, "Citizens Redistricting Commission." While there are years where this commission has a low-non-existent workload, it continues to exist as a department.

The City of Los Angeles does not capture redistricting as its own departmental line-item (to the extent that, for example, there is a departmental line-item for the Ethics Commission).

- Instead, there is a line item in the Los Angeles City [2021-2022 proposed budget](#) for \$1,500,000 (page 231).
  - o The line item is titled, "Census 2020/Redistricting Commission."
    - This implies the cost for redistricting was combined with Census costs
  - o The line item is placed in the "General Fund."
  - o There was no line item provided in the [2022-2023 proposed budget](#) (see page 230 for acknowledgement of this omission).
  - o There was no line item provided in the [2020-2021 proposed budget](#).

The City of Los Angeles does [track what it pays](#) through the controller's office (Kenneth Mejia).

- By searching through the descriptions of expenditures, I found many payments amounting to \$277,515 that were for redistricting efforts
- These were all contracted expenditures.
- These expenses do not show commissioner pay for their meetings
  - [According to LA City Gov](#), The Board of Public Works is the only full-time, paid Board. The Administrative Code authorizes other Boards and Commissions to receive a \$50 stipend per meeting attended though stipends are typically waived. Appointees must be voting residents of the City of Los Angeles and cannot be members of the City Council nor sit on more than one Board or Commission at a time.

The staff for the Los Angeles Redistricting Commission was comprised of Legislative Analysts from the Council Department, and Deputy Attorneys from the City Attorney Department.

- [https://redistricting2021.lacity.org/LACCRC/html/about\\_staff.html](https://redistricting2021.lacity.org/LACCRC/html/about_staff.html)

### **Relevant Information From the State of California Redistricting Commission**

- I used data on wages paid for California redistricting efforts between 2011 and 2021.
  - I find that in 2011, wages paid were \$1.3M. However, in 2012, that dropped precipitously to \$0.4M, and then to \$0.04M in 2013.
  - These low wages paid to the commission remained until an uptick in 2020.
  - In 2020, wages were \$0.8M
  - In 2021, the last year available, wages were \$2.7M + 0.6M in benefits
- Even in the years of low wages paid, the number of employees fluctuated greatly.
  - For example, in 2017, wages to the commission were \$45,384, but spread across 9 employees. In 2018, wages to the commission \$6,300, but spread across 10 employees.
    - This leads me to believe that employees were somehow able to bill small amounts of hours to the redistricting commission. Need to verify.
    - If this is true, then the staff that work redistricting are not fully commission employees, but borrowed employees.
    - Dr. Sara Sadhwani may be able to speak to this.
  - Figure 1 below shows this change in conditions between the 2010 and 2020 Census.

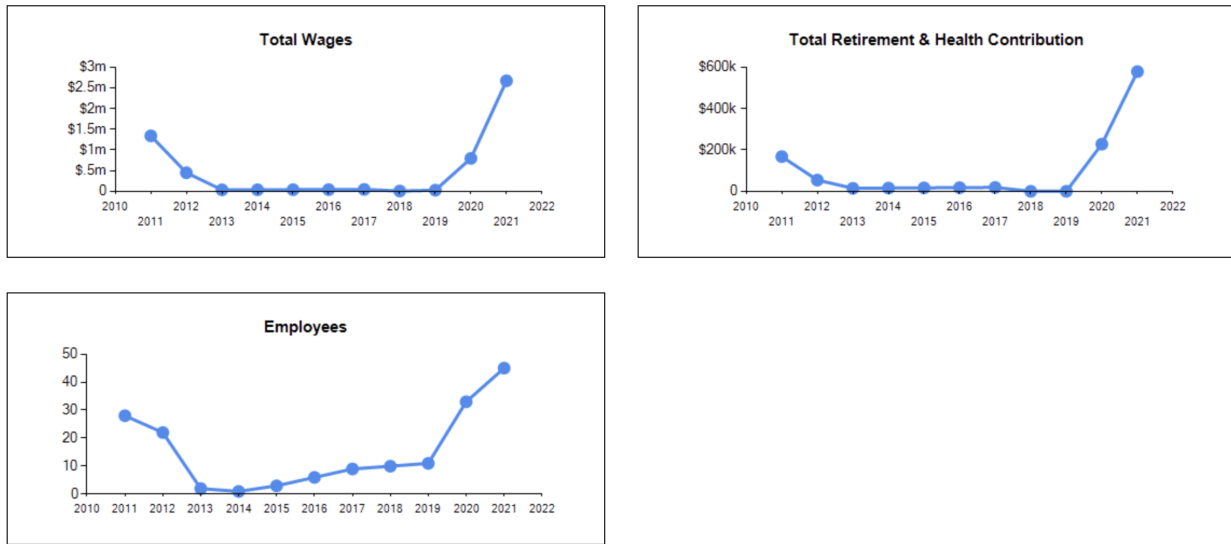


Figure 1: From the California Controller's Office

## EXPLORING THE REPLACEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE ANALYSTS WITH ETHICS COMMISSION EMPLOYEES

COMMISSION STAFF- LOS ANGELES CITY REDISTRICTING COMMISSION									
First Name	Last Name	Department	Job Title	Total Pay	Retirement	Benefits	Total	GENDER	ETHNICITY
JOHN	WICKHAM	COUNCIL	LEGISLATIVE ANALYST V	\$ 208,301.28	\$ 60,261.38	\$ 9,070.08	\$ 277,632.74	MALE	CAUCASIAN
OSCAR	IXCO	COUNCIL	LEGISLATIVE ANALYST IV	\$ 149,169.71	\$ 44,243.74	\$ 8,262.24	\$ 201,675.69	MALE	HISPANIC
ALEX	WHITEHEAD	COUNCIL	LEGISLATIVE ANALYST I	\$ 73,105.20	\$ 21,683.00	\$ 13,858.56	\$ 108,646.76	MALE	CAUCASIAN
HARIT	TRIVEDI	CITY ATTORNEY	DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY IV	\$ 236,912.88	\$ 70,045.91	\$ 20,445.84	\$ 327,404.63	MALE	ASIAN
STEFAN	FAUBLE	CITY ATTORNEY	DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY IV	\$ 215,563.04	\$ 63,713.55	\$ 14,192.40	\$ 293,468.99	MALE	CAUCASIAN
TANEA	YSAGUIRE	CITY ATTORNEY	DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY II	\$ 132,689.84	\$ 39,133.36	\$ 14,192.40	\$ 186,015.60	FEMALE	BLACK

John Wickham was promoted to Assistant Chief Legislative Analyst. Oscar Ixco was promoted from legislative Analyst III to IV in 2021.

POTENTIAL COMMISSION STAFF REPLACEMENTS FROM ETHICS COMMISSION (EXAMPLE POSITIONS)									
First Name	Last Name	Department	Job Title	Total Pay	Retirement	Benefits	Total	Gender	Ethnicity
HEATHER	HOLT	CITY ETHICS COMMISSION	ETHICS OFFICER III	\$ 184,053.84	\$ 54,576.13	\$ 13,009.70	\$ 251,639.67	FEMALE	CAUCASIAN
KIRSTEN	PICKENPAUGH	CITY ETHICS COMMISSION	ETHICS OFFICER II	\$ 160,015.02	\$ 46,241.86	\$ 20,445.84	\$ 226,702.72	FEMALE	CAUCASIAN
TYLER	JOSEPH	CITY ETHICS COMMISSION	ETHICS OFFICER I	\$ 97,930.72	\$ 29,046.25	\$ 8,736.24	\$ 135,713.21	MALE	CAUCASIAN

Ethics Officers have responsibilities and skills that could potentially allow them to supplant the Legislative Analysts from the Council Department. Specifically, these employees are already familiar with the various laws relevant to elections and campaign regulations. Further, their familiarity with audits, data collection, and investigations provide them with an expertise amenable with the charge of staffing a redistricting commission. Supplemental to this page, I provide an Ethics Officer Position Description for the City of Los Angeles. The officers provided here are levels I, II, and III, which is aligned with the current Legislative Analyst Team (I, IV, V).

I do not recommend replacing the Deputy City Attorneys on the Redistricting Commission with employees from the Ethics Commission at this time. There are two primary reasons for this. First, I am not aware of a position in the Ethics Commission that performs an equivalent function as the Deputy Attorneys. Second, while the City Attorney is an elected position, it is a city-wide position. As such, there is less personal incentive for the City Attorney employees to engage in nefarious actions around redistricting. Political allyship would still be a factor, and if we believe redistricting integrity is compromised through the staff provided from the City Attorney Department, the Ethics commission might consider hiring attorneys that can perform a similar functions as the Deputy City Attorneys. As an important note, the integrity of a Redistricting Committee that is staffed by three Ethics Officers would likely limit unethical actions of their Deputy City Attorney teammates. Finally, replacing the Legislative Analysts with Ethics Officers is not associated with a significant change in costs for the Redistricting Commission.