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## OC Education Board Asks State to Allow Board to Decide on Its Own Voting Map



The Orange County Department of Education in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Feb. 23, 2022. (John Fredricks/The Epoch Times)



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The Orange County Board of Education is seeking to take over voting map responsibilities from a county district committee after a legal dispute with the organization last year.

Such committees are created in each county by the California Legislature—which selects committee members from local education boards—and are responsible for the reorganization of school districts, changes in school district boundaries, and the trustee election process, according to the Orange County Department of Education.

Trustees unanimously approved a resolution Aug. 2 to petition the state to transfer the responsibilities of the Orange County Committee on School District Organization to the board.

The resolution ([pdf](#)) points to a state law that allows an education board to act as the county committee for such upon state approval of an education board's petition. It also noted that 35 of the state's 58 education boards act as their county's committee for school district organization.



Parents and community members speak out at an Orange County Board of Education meeting in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Nov. 2, 2022. (Micaela Ricaforte/The Epoch Times)

One community member spoke at the meeting opposing the resolution.

“When I see this resolution, I see more attorney fees ... on both sides that will come out of taxpayer dollars [intended for] school funding for the county’s most in-need students,” the speaker said. “To me, this demonstrates continued fiscal irresponsibility from this board and illustrates the [board’s] distrust of the community and the democratic process.”

The issue comes after legal wrangling about such a map in 2022 over which entity had the authority to enact district maps.

The committee was supposed to approve a new district map for the Orange County Department of Education by Dec. 15, 2021.

The board submitted a proposed map on Dec. 8. However, the committee didn’t approve it and extended its approval deadline to Feb. 2, 2022.

The committee then submitted its own map on Jan. 27, 2022, and approved it by the new deadline.

In January 2022, the board filed a claim in Orange County Superior Court alleging that the committee violated state law by changing the deadline and approving its own map. It also requested a temporary restraining order to stop the new map from going into effect.

However, the board's petition was ultimately denied in March 2022 by Judge Gregory Lewis, who said it failed to prove its authority to override the committee, clearing the way for the final adoption of the committee's map.



"In God We Trust" hangs in the meeting area of the Orange County Board of Education in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Oct. 7, 2020. (John Fredricks/The Epoch Times)

Regarding the previous litigation, board counsel Greg Rolen said during the recent meeting that it was the “inefficiency and unclarity” of the process that led to “several hundred thousand dollars in attorney fees that have been paid.”

“Simply put, this [petition] is good government. This is efficiency and accountability,” he said. “The reasons for the petition are set forth in the resolution: efficiency and clarity.”

Trustee Mari Barke previously told The Epoch Times she thought the committee’s 2022 map was “politically motivated,” and designed to make it difficult for the board’s conservative trustees to win reelection because they no longer represented the areas that voted them in.

“We knew people would be after us because we’re a conservative board, and there’s very few in the state,” Ms. Barke said. “They don’t like that we protect parental rights and educate our constituents about what’s going on.”

A spokesperson for the Orange County Committee on School District Organization, as well as several committee members, were not immediately available for comment.

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