

CONFIDENTIAL ONE-WAY ATTORNEY-CLIENT COMMUNICATION

TO: Applicant Review Panel (Panel) Members Ben Belnap, Ryan Coe, and Angela Dickison

FROM: Christopher Dawson, Panel Counsel

DATE: February 17, 2020 (rev.)

RE: Suggested Interview Questions and Proposed Interview Schedules

Introduction

As in 2010, when the Panel announces the 120 applicants who will be asked to participate in interviews, the Panel will also need to deliberate, decide, and announce the interview schedule, interview format, and a series of standard interview questions that you will ask every interviewee. I have included an agenda item for these decisions. The California State Auditor has built a webpage that allows interviewees to select available interview slots, which will need to go live the day after this meeting adjourns. Immediately following adjournment, I will be sending the interviewees an email with instructions on accessing and using the webpage, as well as the standard interview questions. In order to give time to make sure that the webpage and email are correct, I recommend that the Panel take up these items on the first day of the meeting.

Proposed Interview Schedule

As we have discussed, under the Voters First Act and regulations the Panel is required to select no more than 120 applicants to interview. Given that the panel must interview these applicants, make another cut to 60, and provide a list and supporting materials to the Legislature no later than May 15, 2020, we have sketched out a proposed interview schedule from March 2 to April 22, roughly 8 weeks, with 4 interviews per day, 4 days per week, on Monday through Friday. We will leave Fridays open in order to provide the Panel one day each week to reflect upon that week's interviews and to prepare for the coming week's interviews. It will also provide flexibility in case an applicant needs to reschedule an interview because of an unforeseen reason outside of the applicant's control, something that can only be approved by the Panel upon a showing of compelling circumstances

We have proposed four different daily interview schedules. Under each, all applicants will have the same maximum amount of time to speak—90 minutes. Although some applicants may be more concise than others, no interview may exceed the maximum scheduled time. We have prepared four proposed schedules for your consideration, all include an hour lunch break, breaks between interviews, and ten reserve interview slots on Fridays to permit rescheduling in case of illness or emergency.

Scenario One: 90 Minute Interviews (4 interviews/day) 9:00 AM Start and 30 Minute Breaks

Utilizing this scenario, interviews would begin on March 2, 2020, and continue each Monday through Thursday of each week (excluding March 31, which is a holiday) until April 22, 2020, in order to complete all 120 interviews in a timely manner. This schedule would require you to conduct four interviews every Monday through Thursday from March 2, 2020, through April 22, 2020.

This scenario includes a 30-minute break between each interview and a 1-hour lunch break.

Interview No. 1	9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Break	10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Interview No. 2	11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Lunch	12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Interview No. 3	1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Break	3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Interview No. 4	3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Scenario Two: 90 Minute Interviews (4 interviews/day) 9:00 AM Start and 15 Minute Breaks

Utilizing this scenario, interviews would begin on March 2, 2020, and continue Monday through Thursday of each week (excluding March 31, which is a holiday) until April 22, 2020, in order to complete all 120 interviews in a timely manner. This schedule would require you to conduct four interviews every Monday through Thursday from March 2, 2020, through April 22, 2020.

This scenario includes a 15-minute break between each interview and a 1-hour lunch break.

Interview No. 1	9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Break	10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.
Interview No. 2	10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Lunch	12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.
Interview No. 3	1:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.
Break	2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Interview No. 4	3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Scenario Three: 90 Minute Interviews (4 interviews/day) 9:30 AM Start and 15 Minute Breaks

Utilizing this scenario, interviews would begin on March 2, 2020, and continue Monday through Thursday of each week (excluding March 31, which is a holiday) until April 22, 2020, in order to complete all 120 interviews in a timely manner. This schedule would require you to conduct four interviews every Monday through Thursday from March 2, 2020, through April 22, 2020.

This scenario includes a 15-minute break between each interview and a 1-hour lunch break.

Interview No. 1	9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Break	11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
Interview No. 2	11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.
Lunch	12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.
Interview No. 3	1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Break	3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Interview No. 4	3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Scenario Four: 90 Minute Interviews (4 interviews/day) 9:30 AM Start and 30 Minute Breaks

Utilizing this scenario, interviews would begin on March 2, 2020, and continue Monday through Thursday of each week (excluding March 31, which is a holiday) until April 22, 2020, in order to complete all 120 interviews in a timely manner. This schedule would require you to conduct four interviews every Monday through Thursday from March 2, 2020, through April 22, 2020.

This scenario includes a 30-minute break between each interview and a 1-hour lunch break.

Interview No. 1	9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Break	11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Interview No. 2	11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Lunch	1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Interview No. 3	2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Break	3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Interview No. 4	4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Proposed Policies for Late or Absent Applicants

In addition to adopting one of the proposed schedules, I recommend that the Panel adopt a policies for late arrivals, absences, and rescheduling. Regarding late arrivals, in consideration of the Panel’s time as well as fairness for all other applicants, I recommend that the Panel adopt a policy that it wait no more than 15 minutes for late arrivals, and that the late applicant may not get the full 90 minutes. That is, the Panel in its discretion may end the interview at the scheduled time. If the applicant arrives more than 15 minutes late, the Panel will recess until the next scheduled interview.

Regarding absences and rescheduling, I recommend that the Panel adopt a policy that once an applicant has scheduled an interview, rescheduling will be permitted only upon a compelling reason beyond the applicant’s control. The applicant will be required to provide documentation of the reason, which will be accepted or denied in the discretion of Panel Counsel.

Proposed Interview Format

Based upon the successful experience of the 2010 interviews, I recommend that the Panel adopt the following proposed format:

- Each applicant’s interview will start with a series of standard questions, previously provided to the applicant, asked by Panel Counsel. (Please see below for the list of proposed standard questions.)
- After the applicant responds to the standard questions, each Panel Member will be given 20 minutes to ask additional questions.
- Panel Counsel will be allowed to ask follow-up questions.
- If time permits, Panel members and counsel will be given the opportunity to ask more questions.
- The applicant will be given the opportunity to make a closing statement.

Proposed Standard Interview Questions

Based upon the successful experience of the 2010 interviews, I recommend that the Panel adopt four or five standard interview questions to be provided in advance and asked of each interviewee. By providing all applicants advance notice, every applicant will have an equal opportunity to prepare for the interview, whether they are the first interviewee or last. Although you will pose several standard questions to each interviewee, these questions should elicit answers that reveal something unique to each applicant, rather than a single “correct” answer all applicants could research and answer uniformly. In addition to the four or five standard questions that the Panel will agree to in advance, you will also ask each interviewee various questions that are unique to that applicant based upon your review of the application, other information, and follow-up questions.

To assist you in your deliberations regarding the standard interview questions, I have compiled the following list for your consideration:

1. Describe the Ideal Commissioner.
 - What specific skills and attributes does the Ideal Commissioner possess?
 - Compare your own skills and attributes to the Ideal Commissioner.

- What would hinder or impair your ability to perform as a Commissioner? How would you overcome or compensate?
2. Work on the Commission requires members of different political backgrounds to work together. Since the 2010 Commission was selected and formed, the American political conversation has become increasingly polarized, whether in the press, on social media, and even in our own families.
 - Have you been personally affected by this political polarization and if so, what have you done to mitigate this challenge?
 - What characteristics do you possess – and what characteristics should your fellow Commissioners possess—that will protect against hyperpartisanship?
 - What specific plans will you have to ensure that the work of the Commission is not seen as polarized or hyperpartisan?
 3. What is the greatest pitfall the Commission could encounter?
 - What actions would you take to avoid or ameliorate this pitfall?
 - And if the Commission does encounter this pitfall, what actions would you take to help it recover?
 4. If you are selected, you will be one of fourteen members of the Commission which is charged with working together to create maps of the new districts. Please describe a situation from your life where you had to work collaboratively with others on a project to achieve a common goal.
 - Tell us the goal of the project, what your role in the group was, and how the group worked well and not so well.
 - What lessons would you take from this group experience to the Commission if selected?
 5. A considerable amount of the Commission’s work will involve meeting with people from all over California who come from very different backgrounds and a wide variety of perspectives.
 - What experiences have you had traveling, working, or living in various parts of California and how have they made you the Californian you are today?
 - If you are selected as a Commissioner, what skills, attributes, and experiences will make you effective at interacting with the public?
 6. As you probably know, prior to the adoption of Proposition 11, which created the Commission, redistricting was done by the Legislature, which led to a perception that politicians were drawing district maps for partisan gain. Although the Commission is made up of members of different parties, how do think the Commission can avoid perceptions of political bias or conflict?
 7. Describe a situation from your personal experience where you had to work with others to resolve a conflict or a difference of opinion. Please describe the issue and explain your role in addressing and resolving the conflict. If you are selected to serve on the Commission, explain how you will resolve conflicts that arise among the Commissioners.