

William J. Priest

Of Counsel

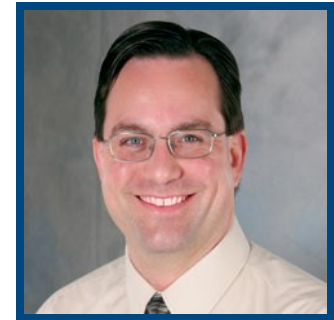
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At a Glance

Jim is well versed in local elections laws.

He has extensive experience in land use, development and public works law.

He regularly assists clients in finding solutions to their particular finance challenges.

Profile

William J. “Jim” Priest represents exclusively public agencies as of counsel in the Municipal Law practice group of Best Best & Krieger LLP. Operating out of the firm’s Ontario office, he provides both general and special counsel services to many cities, counties and special districts. Jim’s areas of practice include local elections, public finance, land use and ethics law.

Election Law

Jim is well versed in local elections laws, running the gamut from initiative, referendum and recall procedures, to political reform/campaign finance, to election recounts and contests. He devotes much of his time to helping clients comply with the California Voting Rights Act and the California Voter Participation Rights Act (SB 415) – laws that often require public agencies to change the timing and means by which they elect representatives. He assisted the City of Colton in restructuring its City Council through a local ballot measure, thereby reducing its membership from seven to five. He represented the City of La Habra Heights concerning a controversial (and heavily litigated) “anti-fracking” initiative measure, as well as a ballot recount arising from its City Council election. He has worked with dozens of client agencies throughout the State on other local ballot measures – ranging from charter amendments to tax

Areas of Focus

Practices

[Business Licensing & Franchising](#)

[California Public Records Act](#)

[Elections](#)

[Fees, Taxes & Assessments](#)

[Government Policy & Public Integrity](#)

[Municipal Law](#)

[Public Contracts & Construction](#)

[Public Finance](#)

Industries

[Municipal](#)

measures to land use restrictions to marijuana business regulations. He is also experienced in many types of local tax, assessment and fee/rate setting procedures under Propositions 13, 62, 218 and 26 (which often require an election or similar approval process). He regularly assists clients in finding solutions to their particular finance challenges, whether through local tax measures, property assessments, utility rates or other revenue sources.

Municipal Planning

Jim has extensive experience in land use and development law. He serves as general counsel to the Palm Springs Planning Commission, most recently assisting the City in drafting proposed golf course redevelopment rules as well as a comprehensive update to its historic preservation ordinance. During his 12 years of service for the City of Covina, he served as general counsel to its Planning Commission and assisted the City with a variety of high-profile downtown development projects, including the Heritage Plaza Park, the Metrolink and Civic Center Parking Structures, City Ventures' "Covina 2" and "Covina 3" projects, and the Olson Company's "Vintage Walk" and "Citrus Walk" mixed-use developments. He assisted the City of Azusa in developing public parking facilities for its Metro Gold Line train stations. He also assisted Azusa in forming a dedicated joint powers authority, which will long-term manage more than 200 acres of undeveloped hillside property overlooking the City for conservation purposes. Jim also served as general counsel to the City of Gardena Planning Commission from 2006 to 2009, where he assisted that City with its first comprehensive General Plan update in 30 years.

As part of his municipal practice, Jim frequently advises clients on issues regarding the State Planning and Zoning Law, Subdivision Map Act, Brown Act, Public Records Act and similar laws.

Experience

Jim returned to BB&K after spending several years with Oliver, Sandifer and Murphy in Los Angeles, where he served as assistant city attorney for the cities of Gardena and Downey. During his prior tenure with BB&K, he served many public agencies, including the cities of Fontana and Ontario, as well as the March Joint Powers Authority. In his earliest years of practice, Jim was a member of the Illinois Bar, serving as assistant city attorney for the cities of Maroa and Forsyth, Ill.

Jim is a native of the San Fernando Valley. He and wife, Mara, have two children, Lauren and Jimmy.

Admissions

- California
- Illinois

Education

- Southern Illinois University Carbondale, J.D.
- University of California, Los Angeles, B.A., social psychology, *cum laude*

Memberships

- Cal Poly Pomona Foundation Board of Directors
- California Political Attorney's Association
- Open Doors Now Board of Directors

Authorships

LEGAL ALERTS | OCT 24, 2019

When Public Opinion Surveys Become Reportable Expenditures Under the Political Reform Act

FPPC Advises When Public Agencies Can Survey Voters and Disseminate Results

AUTHORED ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS | OCT 12, 2018

Public Agency, Officials' & Employees' Rules for Electioneering

BB&K Attorneys Jim Priest and Sigrid Asmundson Discuss the Dos and Don'ts in PublicCEO

LEGAL ALERTS | AUG 16, 2018

General Tax Measure with Related Advisory Measure on Same Ballot Does Not Turn It Into a Special Tax

Issue Related to Number of Votes Needed to Pass a General Versus Special Tax Under Proposition 218

LEGAL ALERTS | NOV 15, 2017

Calif.'s "Mass Mailing" Rule Amended by SB 45

Certain Government-Funded Mailings Prohibited 60 Days Before an Election

LEGAL ALERTS | JUL 18, 2017

Calif. AG Says SB 415 Applies to Charter Cities and Local School Districts Governed by Charter Cities

California Voter Participation Rights Act

LEGAL ALERTS | DEC 14, 2016

Transient Occupancy (Hotel) Taxes May be Limited by Ruling

AUTHORED ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS | SEP 29, 2016

Local Campaign Finance Reform: What Local Agencies Can – and Cannot – Do (Part 2)

By William J. Priest

AUTHORED ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS | SEP 09, 2016

Local Campaign Finance Reform: Can Local Agencies Wean the Baby From “Mother’s Milk?” (Part 1)

By William J. Priest

LEGAL ALERTS | APR 13, 2016

Counties and Special Districts Prohibited from Enacting Substantially Similar Ordinance Subsequent to a Referendum Petition

California Appellate Court Addresses Prohibition in Medical Marijuana Dispensary Ordinance Referendum Opinion

AUTHORED ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS | FEB 01, 2016

New California Law May Require Public Agencies to Change Regular Election Dates

By William J. Priest

LEGAL ALERTS | DEC 18, 2015

New California Laws Impacting Public Agencies

This comprehensive round-up includes new legislation that will impact cities, counties, special districts and schools.

AUTHORED ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS | SEP 09, 2015

U.S. Supreme Court Affirms That Content-Based Sign Codes Violate The First Amendment

By Sigrid K. Asmundson and William J. Priest

LEGAL ALERTS | AUG 12, 2015

Immediate Action Required by Cities to Begin Collecting Utility Users Tax

New Law Will Allow California Cities to Receive Tax Revenue on Prepaid

LEGAL ALERTS | JUL 02, 2015

Arizona Town's Content-Based Sign Rules Struck Down by U.S. Supreme Court

Local Agencies Urged to Review Sign Codes in Favor of Content-Neutral Rules

AUTHORED ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS | MAR 09, 2015

New Kids on the Block: Regulatory Concerns in Online Vacation Rental Marketplaces

By William J. Priest

AUTHORED ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS | NOV 05, 2014

A Taxing Problem: How to Regulate Online Vacation Rental Marketplaces

By William J. Priest

- "Reducing Cyber Vulnerability and Keeping Online Voter Registration Data Safe," *BBKnowledge*, Oct. 6, 2016
- "Local Campaign Finance Reform: Can Local Agencies Wean the Baby From 'Mother's Milk'? Part 1," *PublicCEO*, Sept. 28, 2016
- "Engaging California Voters," co-author, *PublicCEO*, Aug. 17, 2016
- "The Basics: Municipal Election Laws," co-author, *PublicCEO*, April 24, 2016
- "Engaging California Voters," *BBKnowledge*, Aug. 17, 2016
- "The Basics: Municipal Election Laws," *BBKnowledge*, April 25, 2016
- "A Guide to New Laws Impacting Public Agencies," *BBKnowledge*, Jan. 5, 2016
- "What does 'One Person, One Vote' Mean?," *BBKnowledge*, Dec. 10, 2015
- "U.S. Supreme Court Affirms That Content-Based Sign Codes Violate The First Amendment," *BBKnowledge*, Sept. 9, 2015
- "U.S. Supreme Court Affirms That Content-Based Sign Codes Violate The First Amendment," co-author, *PublicCEO*, Sept. 3, 2015
- "A Taxing Problem: How to Regulate Online Vacation Rental Marketplaces," co-author, *PublicCEO*, Oct. 24, 2014
- "Cities Grappling With Challenges of How to Tax, Regulate Short-Term Rentals," *Bloomberg BNA*, Oct. 20, 2014
- "State Constitution Now Requires Local Agencies to Follow Brown and Public Records Acts - Whether or Not State Reimburses Compliance Costs," *BB&K Legal Alert*, June 10, 2014
- "New Laws Affecting Public Agencies in California," *BB&K Legal Alert*, Nov. 25, 2013

- “FPPC to Establish Electronic Filing and Public Disclosure System for Statements of Economic Interests,” *BB&K Legal Alert*, Oct. 14, 2013