



LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

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Assembly Committee on Elections – State of California
Informational Hearing

Voter Participation and Engagement: Strategies for Bridging Gaps and Ensuring Accurate Registration

Thursday, November 16, 2023

TESTIMONY: Perspectives of Current and Former California Election Officials

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Good afternoon, Chair Pellerin, Vice Chair Lackey, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing today on such a timely and important topic. I am Dean Logan, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk for Los Angeles County.

As articulated in the Hearing Overview and in the opening testimony this afternoon, California has established a strong foundation to support free and fair elections, to encourage and facilitate voter registration and participation, and to support a voter-centered approach to when, where, and how elections are administered.

We know – and the data shows – that structure and policy alone will not bridge the gaps being discussed today. Voter participation stems from intrinsic motivation influenced by more than the time, place, and equipment used for voting. It relies on civic education, trusted messengers, partnerships with advocacy organizations, transparency, and consistency – and, it is eroded by cynicism, lack of access, confusion, and controversy.

Our role, as election administrators, is to ensure that once that motivation is achieved, there are no barriers to participation and that we deliver a voting experience that conveys the significance and power of the vote.

As I am sure you are aware; the nature, integrity, and structure of our electoral process are under tremendous scrutiny as we navigate political discourse, respond to the continuing aftereffects of a global pandemic, secure against cyber-attacks, respond to mis/dis and mal information, and embrace the changing needs of our electorate.

The role of election administrators and the expectations placed upon them are more visible, demanding, and threatened than at any time in recent history. That said, I

believe it is the strength of our statutory foundation established by this legislative body that ensures our ability to respond and to focus efforts and resources on programs and activities that provide access to voter registration and voting for all who are eligible in California.

Los Angeles County is the largest and most diverse election jurisdiction in the country with over 10 million residents, and 5.6 million registered voters, from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, and communities. We serve an electorate with large populations of non-or limited-English speakers, voters with disabilities, and communities in large, dense urban centers as well as those in rural, geographically isolated areas.

Over a decade ago, we embarked on an unprecedented effort to design, engineer, manufacture, and implement the first publicly owned voting system in the United States; an initiative we identified as Voting Solutions for All People. Through that effort, we reimagined the voting experience, transformed the commercial voting systems marketplace, and stretched the reigns of our regulatory environment by setting a new standard for voting system design that prioritizes usability, security, and accessibility.

Most voters in Los Angeles County today use a Vote by Mail ballot, but how they interact with that resource differs across demographics, so the need for options and customization are critically important. The availability of secure ballot drop boxes, ballot tracking tools, and signature verification applications are examples.

We offer Vote Centers where any voter in the County can vote in-person for up to ten days leading up to and on Election Day at any location – and, where voters can access a broad range of accessible services that offer an independent, secure, and private voting experience – and, where voters can access customizable language assistance through our audio ballot and multi-lingual ballot display options.

We also operate Mobile Vote Centers and Flex Vote Centers to complement traditional voting locations. Mobile Vote Centers are deployed to high-traffic locations, such as sporting events, community events, college campuses, and employment centers. Flex Vote Centers are used to bring voting services to historically vulnerable communities such as language minorities, justice-involved individuals, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, voters with disabilities, and geographically isolated voters. Our Mobile and Flex Vote Centers rely on community partners to identify and serve these communities.

Los Angeles County supports a comprehensive multi-lingual voter education and outreach campaign to accommodate and engage voters in their preferred language. To kick off our outreach initiatives for the 2024 Presidential Primary Election, the Department launched a direct mailing campaign to registered voters that included essential information about the 2024 Presidential Primary Election and was specifically designed to allow voters to request in-language support.

Our voter education and outreach campaigns are designed with a commitment to an in-language support model. The Department crafts and implements an inclusive program built on maximizing every dollar spent and utilizing impactful tactics through paid advertising, community-based outreach, and partnerships with hyper-local and ethnic news media.

These communication pillars are the cornerstones to reaching voters and communicating clearly, in various languages, about voting rights, voting options, and where to find trusted voting resources so residents and voters are well-informed in a timely and accessible manner. Our approach to reaching voters in-language involves multiple channels and methods of communication including TV, radio, digital billboards, social media, print media, Google search, digital banners, email, SMS, and streaming online video.

Our language access programs require both one-time and ongoing investments in labor, contract services, and technology. The per-election costs to support language access in elections are broadly allocated to production of printed materials, translation services, and multi-lingual election workers.

For a major countywide election, the Department estimates costs of approximately \$13.28 million per election. Printed materials include sample ballots, promotional material, Vote Center supplies, vote by mail ballots, and facsimile ballots. Translation services include staffing costs to translate and proof official election materials and content in 19 languages. This is critical to ensuring an equitable voting experience across all supported languages.

Today, our voting systems in Los Angeles County are comprehensive, scalable, and component-based covering all elements of the voting and vote counting process – but maintaining those systems and supporting the associated services requires consistent, ongoing, and reliable funding.

Efficiencies gained in automating the voter registration process have allowed us to redirect resources previously used to manually process voter registration applications to now support enhanced voter outreach and education programs – and the infusion of state and federal funding in 2020 and 2022 helped significantly with visibility, accessibility, and security. The loss of that funding leading into the 2024 election cycle puts at risk the successes achieved by the policy and structural foundation established by this legislative body.

As a field of professionals in elections administration, we are entrusted to facilitate voters' access and ability to cast a vote and to have confidence in that vote's impact, but the process, outcomes, and legitimacy of elections do not belong to us, rather they belong to the voters for whom those systems give voice, influence, and power. We must never lose sight of that.

Thank you, again, for holding this hearing and for raising awareness around the complexity and importance of voter participation and sustainable support for election administration in California.

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