



DEBRA BOWEN | SECRETARY OF STATE | STATE OF CALIFORNIA
1500 11th Street, 6th Floor | Sacramento, CA 95814 | Tel (916) 653-7244 | Fax (916) 653-4620 | www.sos.ca.gov

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County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum #09101

TO: All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters

FROM: *Debbie O'Donoghue*
Debbie O'Donoghue
Deputy Secretary of State, Voter Education and Outreach Services

RE: Polling Place Accessibility: Report from the U.S. Government
Accountability Office (GAO)

The GAO visited randomly selected polling places across the country on November 4, 2008, and conducted polling place accessibility surveys. As a result of its work, the GAO issued a report, "Voters with Disabilities: More Polling Places had no Potential Impediments than in 2000, but Challenges Remain." The 2008 effort is, among other things, part of a broader study on whether voting access at polling places has improved since 2000.

Although seven California counties were visited - Del Norte, Los Angeles, Monterey, Sacramento, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Clara - the GAO did not provide individual county results.

Some of the highlights of the report point to improvements:

- The number of polling places without barriers is increasing.
- Potential barriers at building entrances are dropping.
- Voters are almost always getting access to accessible voting equipment, although in about 5% of the cases, the machines were not set up and powered on.
- In 77% of the polling places visited, the accessible voting equipment offered the same or more privacy to voters casting ballots on those units, compared with voting stations for other voters. The other 23% of polling places had accessible voting equipment stations that offered less privacy.

To read the entire report, please visit the GAO's website at www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-685

If you have any questions, please contact me at (916) 653-6173 and odonoghue@sos.ca.gov, or Chris Reynolds at (916) 651-7837 and creynolds@sos.ca.gov