



September 30, 2014

County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum #14253

TO: All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters

FROM: /s/ Susan Lapsley
Deputy Secretary of State and Counsel

RE: Polling Places: Sensitivity and Translated Ballot Materials

Sensitivity at the Polls

For the upcoming November General Election, the Secretary of State would like to remind county elections officials of the helpful reference sheet, titled "Disability Sensitivity at the Polls." The reference sheet is a tool to help ensure poll workers are treating all voters thoughtfully and appropriately on Election Day. You may wish to incorporate the reference sheet when conducting poll worker training and include it with the materials provided to poll workers on Election Day. The reference sheet is attached and is also available on our [website](#).

Translated Ballot Materials

As noted in [CC/ROV Memorandum #13132](#) elections officials are required to post certain translated ballot materials in precincts where 3% or more of the voting age residents are members of a single language minority and lack sufficient skills in English to vote without assistance. (Elections Code section 14201(d).)

Specifically, for each specified precinct, county elections officials are required to:

- Translate a facsimile ballot and related instructions in the specified language(s).
- Post the translation(s) in a conspicuous location in the appropriate polling place.

To be certain both the requirement and the intent of the law are met, please work with your polling place workers to ensure the materials are posted in a conspicuous location that can be found easily by voters. The intent of the law is not met when, for example, the translated materials are stacked on tables or blocked by other materials placed in front of the translated materials that are posted on a wall.

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The Secretary of State encourages you to review your poll worker training curriculum to ensure it appropriately guides poll workers on how best to post materials to ensure people who need the materials can easily find them.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at susan.lapsley@sos.ca.gov.

DISABILITY SENSITIVITY AT THE POLLS

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

The rules of etiquette and good manners apply when working with every voter who enters a polling place. In addition, the following tools may be helpful when working with people with disabilities.

Meeting a Person With a Disability

- **A handshake is not an appropriate greeting for everyone.** Greet everyone with a smile and a spoken greeting.
- **Speak directly to a person with a disability,** not just to others accompanying a person.
- **Offer assistance, but do not insist on providing it.** It is best to ask all voters if they need assistance, instead of assuming who may or may not have a disability. Always ask how you may best assist and never make assumptions. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted, then listen or ask for instructions. For example, it may be unsafe to grab a walker, white cane, or other aid used by a person who is disabled.
- **Don't ask about or mention the person's disability** unless he or she talks about it or it is relevant to the conversation. Don't praise someone with a disability for having "overcome" the disability. All voters are equal. Don't patronize or talk down to someone with a disability.
- **Keep your communications simple.** Use plain language (i.e., "May I help you?" rather than "May I assist you?"). Keep sentences short, and rephrase or repeat your comments if the voter is not understanding you. Focus on one topic at a time and be sure to allow time for the person to respond. Also, pay attention to the person while you're speaking with them, as they may be using body language to communicate.

Interacting With a Person Who Uses a Wheelchair

- **Provide personal space.** Do not push, lean on, or hold onto a person's wheelchair unless the person asks. Remember, the wheelchair is part of his or her personal space.
- **Clear the path.** Make sure that the path of travel to the check-in tables and voting booths are clear before the polls open and remain clear throughout the day.
- **When giving direction to a wheelchair user,** consider the distance, weather, and physical obstacles such as curbs and stairs the wheelchair user will encounter. Know where the accessible pathways, restrooms, and water fountains are in and outside of the building.

Meeting Someone With a Disability That Affects Speech

- **Pay attention, be patient, and wait** for the person to complete a thought and do not try to finish it for them. Ask the person to repeat the thought if you do not understand what they are trying to say.
- **Understand a person may use assistive technology** such as an alphabet board or computer to communicate.

DISABILITY SENSITIVITY AT THE POLLS

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Meeting Someone Who Has a Visual Impairment

- **Greetings.** Identify yourself and introduce anyone else who may be with you. Also, don't leave the person without saying you are leaving.
- **Guiding.** If asked to be a sighted guide, place your arm against their hand, or close enough that they can easily find it. Never push or pull someone, always point out obstacles along the way, and discuss where you are going.
- **Service animals.** Do not pet or distract a service animal. The service animal is responsible for the owner's safety and is working. People with visual impairments often use service animals. However, be aware that people with other disabilities may use service animals as well.

Communicating With Someone Who Is Deaf or Uses an Assistive Hearing Device

- **Let the person take the lead** in establishing which communication method he or she prefers to use (e.g., assistive technology, writing on a piece of paper).
- **Talk directly to the person** even if a sign language interpreter is present. If the person lip reads, face him or her directly and speak at a moderate pace. For some people, it also may help to simplify sentences and use more body expressions.

Use Appropriate Language

- Instead of disabled person, handicapped, or crippled, say **person with a disability**
- Instead of an able-bodied person, say **person without a disability**
- Instead of mentally retarded, retard, slow, or special, say **person with an intellectual or developmental disability**
- Instead of the blind, say **person who is blind or visually impaired**
- Instead of hearing-impaired, deaf, dumb, or mute, say **person who is hard of hearing or a person who is deaf**
- Instead of a victim of, suffers from, or afflicted with (a condition), say **person who has (a condition)**
- Instead of epileptic, say **person with epilepsy**
- Instead of a Down's person or Mongoloid, say **person with Down Syndrome**