



# SHIRLEY N. WEBER, Ph.D.

## CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

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### **Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)**

Wednesday, June 21, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

#### Meeting Minutes

### **1. Welcome, Call to Order, Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum**

VAAC members present:

- Fred Nisen
- Jan Bell
- Mary Helen Gallegos
- Larry Smith
- Veronica Elsea

Members of SOS

- Debra Ledsinger – OVSTA
- George Harris – VCA
- Anakaren Monroy – Legislative Unit
- Jana Lean – Chief of Elections

Members of the public:

- Karie Lewis – Disability Rights CA

Quorum was met.

### **2. VAAC Members Community Outreach Updates**

- Fred Nisen
  - Fred Nisen recently did a training with The League of Women Voters in Alameda County on behalf of Disability Rights CA.
- Veronica Elsea
  - No updates.
- Jan Bell
  - Jan Bell talked about a local ALS theatre event that she will be attending, and she plans to conduct a survey with the attendants about voter accessibility issues.
- Mary Helen Gallegos
  - Monterey County Elections has been busy conducting surveys on voter accessibility and are conducting widespread outreach campaigns.

### 3. SOS Updates

- Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)
  - Debra Ledsinger provided an update on the current status of voting systems that are either in the application review phase or are undergoing testing. She also stated that there are no new RAVBM applications at this time.
  - Veronica Elsea asked for an overview of how the testing phase is conducted. NaKisha Robinson from OVSTA answered that there are multiple phases within the testing process. This includes a long process of reviewing applications, taking public comments, and contracting with the voting system companies. Then testing begins and is followed by the issuance of reports and a period when the public can raise questions and offer comment.
- Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
  - George Harris from SOS had no updates from the VCA team.
  - Fred Nisen asked about the VCA counties that are currently transitioning to the VCA model. George Harris replied that the only county that SOS can confirm is undergoing the process right now is Humboldt County.
- Legislation
  - Anakaren Monroy from SOS had no updates from the legislative team.

### 4. VAAC Working Groups

- Resource Tool for Voting Machines
  - Veronica Elsea offered an update on the document the group has been working on to advise counties in their efforts to assist voters with disabilities with using voting systems and easily accessing voting services. The document also provides best practices for the training of poll workers to assist voters with disabilities.
  - Susan Lapsley from SOS asked if there is a draft prepared. Veronica Elsea replied that there is a draft that is available to members right now that they have been working on all year.
  - Veronica Elsea hopes that the VAAC may be close to voting on sending the resource tool to SOS for their review in the hopes that this document can be sent to counties as a resource.
  - Mary Helen Gallegos proposed a motion, which was seconded by Larry Smith.

Motion: To send the Resource Tool for Voting Machines to SOS for their review.

Motion passes 5-0.

- County Local VAACs
  - Jan Bell thanked SOS for adding the information for the County Local VAACs to their website.
  - Jan Bell announced that her group is preparing a draft survey to ask local VAAC members and participants about their efforts to recruit VAAC members to see what strategies are effective and which are not.

- Fred Nisen suggested that a survey may not be necessary, and that it may be better to produce a best practices document since the VAAC are already aware of the issues concerning local VAAC recruitment. Jan Bell replied that the group will take this into account.
- Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) FAQs
  - Veronica Elsea and the group have revised and expanded the list of RAVBM FAQs.
  - Veronica Elsea presented a motion, seconded by Mary Helen Gallegos.

Motion: To send the RAVBM FAQs to SOS for their review and approval.

Motion passes 5-0.

- Disability Etiquette
  - Veronica Elsea and the group have updated this document, revising terms and creating more appropriate and helpful advice on disability etiquette.
  - Veronica Elsea presented a motion, seconded by Larry Smith.

Motion: To send the Disability Etiquette document to SOS for their review and approval.

Motion passes 5-0.

- Emergency Voting
  - Fred Nisen and the group have updated the Emergency Voting document and have revised the content and simplified the language.
  - Veronica Elsea presented a motion, seconded by Mary Helen Gallegos.

Motion: To send the Emergency Voting document to SOS for their review and approval.

Motion passes 5-0.

## 5. Shasta County Voting System

- Fred Nisen offered an update on Shasta County regarding the County Board of Supervisors' decision to end their voting system contract with Dominion without signing a new contract for a different voting system. They have opted instead for a hand-count of ballots, but this would mean that the accessibility features that voting systems offer will not be available to voters with disabilities in Shasta County.
- Shasta County has decided to take up a contract with Hart Voting Systems to provide the accessibility features to voters with disabilities.
- SOS draft regulations have been created for the hand-count that Shasta is planning to conduct, and those regulations are currently open for public comment. There will also be a public hearing at the SOS auditorium in Sacramento on July 3, 2023.
- There is also a bill in the legislature right now (AB 969), to prevent county officials from opting to conduct hand-counts in lieu of using a voting system.

- Questions were asked about whether the Hart Voting Systems machine will still be able to provide a secret ballot to voters and whether the features for Deaf and Hard of Hearing voters will also be available. Susan Lapsley answered that the Hart machines will have these features available to Shasta voters.

#### **6. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items**

- Veronica Elsea asked for an update on whether these meetings will be able to move to Zoom soon (which the VAAC generally feels is easier to use), something that has been discussed with SOS. Jana Lean, SOS Chief of Elections, answered that they are currently working with the SOS IT department to make that happen.
- Fred Nisen asked a question of George Harris from VCA about other counties that may be preparing to announce their transition to the VCA model. George Harris said he will look to provide those updates when the counties make that announcement.
- Veronica Elsea asked for a future agenda item to be provided updates on the status of the working group documents that are going to be sent to SOS for review and approval.

#### **7. Adjournment**