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Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee

(VAAC) Wednesday, July 17, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

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

VAAC members present:

- Fred Nisen
- Veronica Elsea
- Mary Helen Gallegos
- Roxana Castro
- Aaron Nevarez
- Mat Ptacek
- Mike Nguyen
- Rebecca Donabed

Members of SOS:

- Adam Quintana – Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

Quorum was met.

2. VAAC Members Community Outreach Updates

- Fred Nisen
 - Did a podcast with Common Causes about the history of voters with disability.
 - Meeting with counties to review recommendations from their poll monitoring from March and May.
 - Developing resources to help communicate with deaf and hard of hearing. Meeting with counties VAAC for resources regarding ASL.
- Veronica Elsea
 - No updates.
- Aaron Nevarez
 - Local VAAC (LA County) on August 1st.
 - Counties are interested in Outreach working group to gain more engagement.

- Mary Helen Gallegos
 - Continuing with outreach efforts.
- Mat Ptacek
 - Setting up local VAAC (SLO County) meeting for late August or early September.
- Mike Nguyen
 - No updates
- Rebecca Donabed
 - Kings County VAAC in the March 21st election they reserved 4,773 returned ballots and planning a future voter's workshop (date to be determined).
 - Central valley will be holding a workshop on September 10th and 11th in Fresno County for voter registration.
- Roxana Castro
 - Shared information for best practice at CACEO for outreach to voters with disability. Received feedback from counties.
 - Pitched that State VAAC has a working group for Outreach for voters with disability. CACEO was told more information is to come from the State working group.

3. Secretary of State

Voting Systems Testing

- Rodney-No Updates.

Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- Adam Quintana anticipates 11 VCA counties will be updating election administration plans in 2025 prior to 2026 election cycle.
- VCA program recently concluded meetings with county officials and advocacy groups to provide feedback to improve VCA going forward.
- Monthly meetings with all 29 VCA counties continue. One hour every second Tuesday of each month. Discuss Legislative updates, challenges and question for the SOS and best practices are shared.
- Advocacy meetings concluded to see what works and what doesn't for VCA. Feedback is being compiled and will be shared with the Secretary.

Legislation

- Mary Mooney from SOS was absent, No updated

4. March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election Feedback

- Fred:
 - Issue with consistency of display of new Curbside voting and magnifying glass laws at polling places. Displayed at some polling places and not others.
 - There were some accessibility issues, but we tried to handle directly with the county.
- Veronica:
 - At the county level, in Santa Cruz County, issues with drop boxes. Poorly spread and in odd locations. Locations of the VCAs were spread out and perceived to be tough to get to. Advise voters if using drop box to vote very early to avoid lost ballots.
 - To gather information before voting the Statewide Voter's Edge website is too complicated/confusing.
- Mary Helen:
 - Curbside voting signage issues is a focus. Ballot call boxes are too far from parking locations in local county. Currently testing the range of the boxes.
- Aaron:
 - Performed post-election survey, generally positive response. Looking to improve curbside voting process prior to November election.
- Roxanna:
 - Orange County did Pop up voting, partnering with VAAC and LAAC. Located in partner parking lot Bell Institute along with 5 other different partners. We want to focus on outreach. VAAC wanted to address how to promote these efforts through social media, partners, and how to promote it to those who are not part of those organizations.
 - Also working with Cal Tech to do analytical survey to voters voting in person and the end of each election.

5. Working Groups

- **Petitions/Signature Verification**

- Veronica- Currently attempting to contact state legislators to address accessibility issues in the petition process. Current accessibility issues are only changeable through legislation. It is impossible for a blind person to circulate a petition due to the structure of the form (many blind people are not able to legibly write their address, which is required to sign/circulate a petition).
- Question asked: What accommodations were made to people who want to create petitions?
- Aaron responded by asking what resolutions and proposals are in play to address this issue to legislative. Requesting documents from working group with possible suggestions on how to move forward.
- Veronica asks that SOS is it possible to have a location where we can read the complete text of a petition and see what's on the document.
- Can this committee send a note to CACEO that they are researching items and ask for assistance and suggestion from their legislature office contacts – Ryan is going to do research and get back to the working group.

- **Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM) FAQs**

- Veronica: updated last year's FAQ. We discovered that CACEO had a RAVBM FAQ. The working group decided that both documents were useful and addressed different audiences.
- Veronica asked if the ASL recordings will be on the SOS website or the websites of the political parties. Ryan confirmed that it will only be posted on the SOS website.
- Made one change to the FAQ document under "Do all counties use the same RAVBM system?" We include a link that goes to direct page that shows who has been certified and from what county.
- Veronica makes a motion to approve revised RAVBM FAQ for review by SOS, Fred seconds.

All 8 member: Yes

- FAQ document must be reviewed by SOS legal team, update will be provided to working group before next meeting. Once documents are approved by SOS, working groups goals will be completed.
- Propose to leave both versions of FAQ up but ask CACEO to add a link to our version.

- **Curbside Voting**

- Aaron- Nothing for consideration currently. We would like to create an updated curbside document to be used by counties to enhance and improve curbside voting process.
- Curbside voting is now required by all counties in election since March.
- Working on 2 surveys, one going to all counties for feedback (what was done in March, how did it work, what methods were used to notify election workers, were the curbside voters tracked?). Second survey to determine if VAAC stakeholders were involved. Ask how their curbside process is within their individual counties. Both surveys would be combined to provide counties with data to improve curbside voting across the state.
- Freds goal is to have a document prepared by September to have ready for the November Elections.
- Veronica: Previously working groups were not allowed to survey counties. Asking for guidance about methods for working groups to collect information within SOS guidelines.
- Ryan responds with the VAAC can approve surveys to be sent to SOS which with approval can be circulated, but working groups and VAAC cannot directly survey counties.

Outreach to Voters with Disabilities

- Veronica: Working group has put together a list of question to send to SOS to ask counties. Goal is to reach the unreachable.
- Committee is asking to approve the questions we have put together, for SOS to send to counties. SOS, what are your mainstream media outlets? Can we include people with disabilities in outreach efforts? What does SOS do in social media to include voting for disabilities? What is SOS doing to reach people with disabilities? What do counties do to reach people with disabilities not affiliated with organizations?
- Goal of these questions are to gather feedback and produce best practices on how to improve processes and reach the unreachable.
 - Veronica makes a motion to send document to the SOS, Mary Helen seconds.

All 8 members; Yes

6. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

- Next meeting- RAVBM process for Safe at Home Participants
 - Fred-Best Practices for communication with Deaf/HOH voters
 - Roxana-Invite SOS outreach team to discuss current plans for voter outreach
 - Veronica- Asked for individual working groups to get responses from SOS before meeting for submitted documents

7. Adjournment

Next meeting September 18th