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Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, August 16, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

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

VAAC members present:

- Dianne Russell
- Fred Nisen
- Jan Bell
- Larry Smith
- Veronica Elsea

Members of SOS:

- Debra Ledsinger – OVSTA
- Adam Quintana – VCA
- Anakaren Monroy – Legislative Unit
- Erric Garris – Legislative Unit

Members of the public:

- Karie Lewis – Disability Rights CA

Quorum was met.

2. VAAC Members Community Outreach Updates

- Fred Nisen
 - Recently held a training on conservatorships and has been conducting a good deal of VCA-related activities.
- Veronica Elsea
 - No updates.
- Jan Bell
 - Recently met two ASL interpreters who are open to assisting her with voter access efforts.
- Dianne Russell
 - No updates
- Larry Smith
 - Held a hearing recently for the disability and language communities regarding the county's Election Action Plan (EAP). They will be holding another hearing soon.

3. SOS Updates

- Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)
 - Debra Ledsinger from SOS offered an update on current OVSTA testing.
 - Dominion Democracy Suite 5.17A is in an application review.
 - ES&S Version 6.5.0.2 have withdrawn their application.
 - Hart Verity Voting 3.2 is in the post-testing phase and there will be an upcoming public hearing regarding the system on August 31, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at the SOS auditorium in Sacramento.
 - KNOWiNK Poll Pad 3 version 3.4 (ePollbook) has an application in review.
 - Tenex Precinct Central Touchpad Version 6 (ePollbook) has an application in review.
 - Runbeck Sentio Lite EVS and SPS 9.3 (Ballot on Demand) is in post-testing.
 - LA County VSAP 3.0 Voting System is in post-testing.
 - Veronica Elsea asked a question about what post-testing means, and Debra Ledsinger responded that there is a post-testing process involving writing reports and posting them on the website.
 - Veronica Elsea asked about issues with Dominion Voting Systems regarding accessibility and when certain issues will be corrected. Susan Lapsley from SOS responded that she is not aware of any major issues, but Veronica Elsea brought up specific issues regarding the interface of the machine which Veronica Elsea said has created issues for disabled voters. Susan said she is interested in gaining more perspectives about this issue and the problems that voters have been experiencing.
 - Fred Nisen added that some local county VAACs have reported on some of these issues, and Susan stated that she would like to gather this information and explore this further at the next meeting.

- Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
 - Adam Quintana from SOS updated the VAAC on recent VCA news.
 - All VCA counties have submitted their draft EAPs to SOS for review. Final EAPs are due on September 7, 2023.
 - VCA has also received feedback from the counties on the calendars for creating or renewing an EAP. The counties have noted that this tool was very helpful to counties to help counties prepare their own timelines for completion of their EAPs.
 - The VCA continues to meet monthly with the VCA counties to address questions and to share best practices.
 - Fred Nisen asked if Adam Quintana could share the list of counties that are transitioning to the VCA model. Adam Quintana confirmed that Humboldt and Placer counties have publicly announced their plans to become VCA counties. Fred Nisen also asked if SOS will be looking to update and provide future EAP development and renewal calendars in the future? Adam Quintana responded that making available EAP calendars is a best practice that the VCA team will continue to make available.

- Legislation
 - Anakaren Monroy from SOS updated the VAAC on current elections-related legislation.
 - AB 545 would allow a disabled voter to vote by regular ballot outside of a polling place and to eliminate any provisions mandating a voter to declare under oath that they were unable to mark their ballot or that they required assistance. This bill has been placed in the appropriations suspense file.
 - AB 626 would allow voters to return a vote-by-mail ballot to any in-person voting location without placing the ballot in a ballot identification envelope. This bill has been placed in an appropriations suspense file.
 - AB 969 would prohibit any governing body that administers elections from ending a contract with a voting systems vendor without signing a new contract. It would prohibit hand-counting ballots for most elections as well. This bill has recently been ordered for a third reading and it has an urgency clause, meaning it will go into effect immediately upon receiving a two-thirds majority in the legislature and being signed into law by the governor. The Secretary of State's Office submitted a letter of support.
 - AB 1559 would update existing records retention mandates and expands penalties for illegally possessing a key to a voting machine and for possessing credentials or trading passwords to any voting system. This bill is also placed in the appropriations suspense file.
 - Erric Garris from SOS also commented on AB 421 which would make changes to the ballot for referendums. SOS is tracking the bill and has offered feedback but has clarified that the Secretary of State's Office has not taken a stance on the bill.

4. VAAC Working Groups

- County Local VAACs
 - Jan Bell updated the VAAC that they have recognized two counties, Riverside and San Francisco, that do exceptional jobs in recruiting local VAAC members. These counties and their staff could assist in helping to develop best practices for other counties that are still working to recruit local VAAC members.
- Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) FAQs
 - Fred Nisen updated the VAAC that Armando Salud, the Yolo County deputy ROV, hopes to use the RAVBM FAQs in their county VIG. Armando asked for some feedback from the working group about this inclusion, which has been provided.
 - Veronica Elsea asked for clarification about the feedback that Fred Nisen sent to Armando, particularly concerning the relationship between RAVBM access and the accessibility features that the voting systems feature. Veronica Elsea is worried about possibly confusing the counties with the feedback being offered.
 - There was also a discussion about how some counties are working with the California Associate of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) to draft their own RAVBM FAQs template, and there was concern about whether their efforts and the work of the VAAC working group

are redundant. There was reassurance offered from SOS that the working group's document will be reviewed by SOS and possibly implemented.

5. VAAC Working Group Document Updates

- Several documents created by various working groups have been sent to SOS for review, and this process has begun. SOS will likely reach out with questions and feedback to the working groups.

6. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

- As stated above, the agenda for the next meeting should include the accessibility and interface issues with Dominion Voting Systems machines.
- Another agenda item proposed would be to review SOS's accessibility checklists for voting locations. Susan Lapsley asked if Fred Nisen could send her some of the concerns he has heard from counties regarding this issue so that she can gain some awareness of the issue in the meantime.
- Veronica Elsea asked if the committee can be given an update on the Safe-at-Home program and work that the VAAC has recently done with them.

7. Adjournment