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Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, September 18, 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
- Rebecca Donabed

Members of SOS:

- Adam Quintana – Voter’s Choice Act (VCA)
- Rodney Rodriguez – Voting System Testing
- Lexi Howard – Legislation
- Denise Green –Assistant Deputy for Outreach and Education
- Dana Davenport- the Voter Outreach and Education Manager specifically for VCA counties
- Jana Lean- Chief of Elections

Quorum was met

2. VAAC Members Community Outreach Updates

Fred Nisen

- I am collaborating with Alameda County ROV on a training at the California for the blind next month.
- I saw that the SOS updated the Polling Place Accessibility Guidelines. It would be helpful to know exactly what changes were made.

Veronica Elsea

- No updates. Santa Cruz VAAC has not meet up in years and they are not returning my calls.

Aaron Nevarez

- A lot of meetings and Outreach events. Our media campaign kicked off this week, all registered voters received email about making a plan to vote. Lots of activity and moving towards the election.

Mary Helen Gallegos

- We had a great National Voter Registration Day yesterday. 300+ new registered voters, it was county wide participation. I have been busy with outreach in the community and getting ready for the Election.

Mathew Ptacek

- Everything is put together to start VAAC in San Luis Obispo County.

Roxana Castro

- Orange County VAAC meeting two weeks ago, shared updates we did to our website in the accessibility section. Making it easier to use with less clicks to get to the important information. Got confirmation for partners to sharing our fliers for upcoming pop-up events for voting period. We got conformation from Gabe Taylor (from DRC) he conducts sensitivity training for our trainers who train our election workers. So, they have a better frame and reference about when speaking accessibility at vote centers. We finalized our communication tool kit that will be sent out to partner agencies. This election we added 60 seconds, 30 seconds, and 15 seconds educational videos specifically targeting voters with disabilities and talking about the services we offer. Those are going to be playing on our social media and encouraging our partners to share those videos. New for this election we created a series of trusted messenger videos where we partnered with different community partners (Language partners) partners from the disability community, recorded a PSA where they talk about election security and election accessibility.

Rebecca Donabed

- Last week the department partnered with Fresno County ROV to have a voter's workshop to show the public how to work the machines. In October, I will be helping with poll workers training in Tulare County.

3. Secretary of State Updates

Voting Systems Testing

- Rodney: Dominion 519 is still in the post testing phase. Post testing phase is reporting writing, going through identifying anything that happened within the testing that may need some more follow up. The public hearing and public comment periods all take place post testing it encompasses a few different things.
- Fred asked is there an estimate time of when it will be completed?
- Rodney responded by saying all things considered the earliest is the end of this year or beginning of next year 2025.

Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- Adam Quintana: We are anticipating that in 2025 there will be 12 VCA counties that will be holding public meeting to consider revising their EAPs. Each county will be expected to renew their outreach and education plan which they will submit to the Secretary of State for review and approval. Our office is drafting an EAP renewal calendar to share with those counties to assist with meeting specific timelines. The calendar is going through internal reviews right now, we plan to share this calendar with advocates and counties and eventually plan to release it. A similar calendar is being developed for any new counties who would like to transition to VCA.
- We are closely tracking SB 1450; this bill proposes to amend the Voter's Choice Act and as of September 13 it passed the Assembly and the Senate and is now with the Governor's office for a signature. He has until September 30 to sign it into law or veto it.
- SB1450 is proposing to establish VCA taskforce, the plan is for the taskforce to review elections under the VCA and make recommendation to legislator within 6 months. VCA counties with more than 500,000 registered votes are required to establish a voter education outreach advisory committee (just like LAAC and VAAC).
- Robert Ullrey: Rescheduled research symposium from August to October 9. It will be posted on the front of SOS webpage and sending out emails with copy of the links. You can register in person in the auditorium, or you can register for the streaming. The symposium will be on research that was done mostly on the 2022 election the primary and the general. We will have a report out on disability access along with others.

Legislation

- Lexi Howard: Many elections related bills are on the governor's desk; he has until September 30 to sign them. You may have seen on the news yesterday that three deep fake deceptive elections discussion measures were signed yesterday but there are still a number on the governor's desk. Most of the other election bills other than SB 1450 are not accessibility specific but they will be signed by September 30.

Outreach to Voters

- Voter Education and Outreach is August 12 to November 5 is the Student Vote Project Ballot Bowl. We are in the process of high school voters education week. We got to visit San Deigo County and went to some of their juvenile court schools in the last few days. We have the Election Information Virtual Town hall that's September 24 to September 30. California College Civic and Voter Empowerment Summit will occur October 9 that will focus on our student vote project students. Also, October 9 the Secretary of State will have their Research Symposium.
- Our occurring work we have monthly USCIS New Citizenship Ceremonies to register new citizens to vote. We are about to begin working to restore community more intentionally PACT meetings (Parole and Community Team). These are monthly meetings, people attended within 30 days of being released. Also connected with that is DAI (Division of Adult Institutions) meeting at various facilities. Tabling at fairs and festivals.
- August 12 – November 5: Student Vote Project Ballot Bowl was launched.
- October 9: California College Civic and Voter Empowerment Summit: Students can learn about civil engage with different leaders within their community.

SOS Virtual Townhall Webinars

- September 24 - What's on the Ballot? The State Voters Information Guide is currently getting mailed out to voters right now, including Proposition we will be voting on, Candidates statements from the US Senates, Presidential candidates and more.
- September 30 - Make a Plan to vote: Voter Resources we will be displaying important election dates, voters registration information, how to registration to vote by card by mail, online, or at the DMV. Talking about voter accessibility resources such as the ASL videos we have for the State Voter Information Guide. Our State Voters Information Guide is available in larges publication this get out to over 13.5 million households and available in all nine languages we support.
- Promote the Vote: We work with business and companies with helping them engage with their work force, employees and community, to let people know about voting and the importance of voting. We launched the first Podcast ever for the Secretary of State mini-series. Focused on Freedom Summers, information is on our webpage.
- Another support our Secretary of State office provides is Voters Choice Act Ambassador program, this was launch in 2022 this will be the first Presidential Election cycle. We have 29 VCA counties so we have more room to grow. Hoping to build awareness and please share this information to people who want to get involved. The email address: voterschoice@sos.ca.gov
- Voter hotline is up and running, voters can call with questions about the election process, questions on where they need to go to vote. The hotline is available in multiple different languages. Number for English is 1-800-345-8683.

- State VIG is available by mail to registered voters on September 26. They will be provided in large print, audio or by ASL you can go to voterguide@sos.ca.gov for all options.
- SOS Social Media Resources we provide Toolkits to county election offices, Student Vote Project, and VCA Ambassador. The Toolkits are created to each specific group. Each toolkit comes with graphics that are formatted with different social media platform such as Facebook, Instagram and X. We also post ourselves on the SOS social media platforms. Our platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn (specific to Promote the Vote for business engagement in the community.), YouTube and X.
- SOS website has printed resources available that can be download, its available in multiple different languages. It can be found under the Election Voters Information Outreach and Publications on our website. Resources and different type of reports and statistics are also available. There is the November Election Fact Sheet, another great resources for key dates.

4. **Best Practice for Communication with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Voters**

- This discussion was tabled for the next meeting.

5. **RAVBM Process for Safe at Home Participants**

- Rodney: The process for Safe at Home participant is going to be county specific, our recommendation is to reach out to your individual jurisdiction to discuss the implementation process.
- Veronica: The issue we are running into with the Safe at Home Participants are asking counties and they are not getting the answer to their questions. The recommendation is guidance for counties to address these concerns. The issue with accessibility for disabilities inside the program, you don't know the person in the SAHP is blind. Blind people in the SAHP are being left out.
- Jana Lean: I suggest, if someone coming forward to you with this issue, please let our office know, and we can work with the county election officials.
- Aaron Navarro: We have not heard that this is an issue. I'd be interested to know if you know someone in LA county that has this issue to put them in touch with us.
- Veronica: Part of the problem is you not going to hear from members of this group. You don't know who in that group is blind. I'd like the counties to get guidance.

6. **Working Groups**

Petitions/ Signature Verification:

- Veronica: After our last meeting in July, we contacted the staff person to the Assembly Elections Committee. We sent him the questions to see what we can find out about what really happens. We got a repose from him explaining why the SOS answered the questions the way that they did. The only way to fix this is to come up with a Bill. We are going to regroup and strategies what we can do next.

RAVBM FAQ's:

- Veronica: In our last meeting we talked about publishing our document as it stood on the SOS webpage and having a separate CACEO version. We still have not received a response
- Jana: That information has made its way to me, and we are looking at the current fact sheet and taking in consideration what been purposed by the committee and how we can merge the two. We will take all the recommendations and merge them into one document that is plain language and clear that we can provide voters with the information they need. We plan to make these updates before the November Election.

Curbside Voting:

- Fred: We decided that the best course of action is to come up with Best Practice Documents for election to bring them into compliance with AB545 so that every county can offer a similar accessibility. We filled out the recommendation form followed by the best practices document.
- Aaron: Completely agree with the recommendation. Fred, Mary Helen, and I have worked on these are recommendation to send to the SOS office for consideration to put on their website and send out to counties.

Aaron makes a motion to send curbside voting recommendations SOS./ Veronica seconds the motion. 7 Members to vote yes to move this forward.

- Best Practice for Curbside Voters pass and put into motion to send to the Secretary of State Office.

Outreach to Voters with Disabilities:

- Veronica: Our working group has been focused on how to reach voters with disabilities that don't affiliate with organization and in many cases don't admit they have a disability. No responses yet from counties to question we put out from the July meeting that you all approved on. We are asking for committee approval, to create a very simple document like an email to be sent to the counties. This is to encourage counties to include assistance to people with disabilities I their regular outreach. Have counties add a simple sentence to their regular outreach, PSA and documents.
- Fred: What is the sentence you would like the counties to add?
- Veronica: We suggest an easy sentence to mention services to voters with disability when you do your general outreach.
- Mary Helen: We know the other counties are working hard and making sure that they are providing accessibility to their voters and reaching out and having local VAACs within their groups. Making sure we are taking the first step increasing the public service announcements, website, and outreach to notify voters about the accessibility that are available.

- Jana: If there is something specific you want us to relay to the county election officials especial a term or a sentence, I would recommend this committee to be more specific on what's being added. That would be extremely helpful. Creating a message like this is vague, it may not be clear or received by counties on what exactly is being requested. All county elections officials put information about accessibility and in County Voters Information Guide.
- Roxanna: I understand by being so vague might just lead to more questions. Maybe we wait until we hear back from more counties, and we can focus on developing Best Practices with more specifics and we can work on that instead, even though we will meet after the elections it will be a good document to have in anticipation to 2026.

Working group will work on Best Practices and not try to implement anything before November 2024 Elections.

7. Best Practice for Communication with Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Table this agenda item to next meeting

8. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

Future Agenda Items:

- Best Practice for Communication with Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Action Items:

- The SOS will provide clarification on what updates were made to the Polling Place Accessibility vote.
- Veronica requested links to What's on the Ballot? And Make a Plan to Vote. Send links to all SOS social media handles
- Recommendation for the Curbside Voting Document to get reviewed by SOS.
- Updates on RAVBM FAQ's

9. Adjournment

Next Meeting:

November 20, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.