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Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, October 18, 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
- Mary Helen Gallegos

Members of SOS:

- NaKeshia Robinson – OVSTA
- Adam Quintana – VCA
- Anakaren Monroy – Legislative Unit
- Susan Lapsley – HAVA

Members of the public:

- Karie Lewis – Disability Rights CA

Quorum was met.

2. VAAC Members Community Outreach Updates

- Jan Bell
 - Jan Bell has been working with Larry Smith and Fred Nisen on outreach to counties for recruiting more individuals to their VAACs.
- Veronica Elsea
 - Santa Cruz County is currently working on their Election Administration Plan (EAP). Public comments are open until 10/29/23.
 - There has been a lot of staff turnover and role changes in their county, so they are hoping to get VAAC meetings back on a regular schedule now that they are fully staffed again.

- County is currently looking for more drop boxes.
- Fred Nisen
 - Fred and his team are working on reviewing EAPs for several counties.
 - They are also working on a new project about voting access for people who use American Sign Language (ASL) and collecting information from counties.
- Dianne Russel
 - Working on HAVA proposal around physical accessibility training for counties.
- Larry Smith
 - A small election is currently underway, and Riverside is getting ready for the March 2024 primary election.
 - Held a local VAAC meeting last month, and one is scheduled for November.
- Mary Hellen Gallegos
 - County has been doing a lot of voter outreach for poll workers and accessibility for the March 2024 primary election.
 - Next local VAAC meeting is soon.

3. SOS Updates

- Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)
 - NaKesha Robinson informed the committee that OVSTA is working on several testing efforts.
 - Hart Verity Voting 3.2
 - Certified on September 26.
 - Dominion Democracy Suite 5.19
 - Hosting accessibility testing at SOS Nov 1-3.
 - Dominion Democracy Suite RAVBM 5.9
 - Application under review.
 - Testing is done completely remote.
 - Tenex Precinct Central Touchpad Version 6
 - Application is still in the planning stages.
 - Testing to begin in 2 weeks.
 - Runbeck Novus v6.3
 - Ballot duplication system is currently undergoing testing.
 - ES&S Balotar 3.0.5.1 and BOD 1.0
 - Application currently under review.
 - Fred Nisen asked when Dominion submitted their application. NaKesha Robinson responded that for Democracy Suite 5.19, the application was submitted on

August 29, and for the RAVBM system, that application was submitted on August 30.

- Veronica Elsea mentioned that she would be interested in participating in the testing. NaKasha Robinson will send information to Ryan Reece to send to VAAC members.
- Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
 - Adam Quintana
 - The VCA team has been working with 19 counties to finalize their EAPs.
 - The majority of VCA counties have submitted their EAPs for review and approval by the VCA team.
 - October 31 is the deadline for counties to turn in their EAPs. Only 3 counties are still pending.
 - Fred Nisen mentioned that he knows one county will not be able to meet the deadline. Adam Quintana responded that they are confident that two of the three counties will be able to meet the deadline and that the VCA team is following up very closely with the third county to address any concerns they have.
 - The VCA team hosts monthly calls with all 29 VCA counties to share updates with counties, discuss concerns from advocates, go over best practices, and identify challenges that any counties may face.
 - The VCA team is in the process of sharing 2022 election data with counties. This includes voting trends, voting preferences, demographics, etc.
 - The goal is for counties to look at the data and use it to customize their outreach and education programs.
 - Reports are to be posted on the SOS website.
 - VCA team is planning to meet with counties to discuss Mid-Year Status Report
<https://admin.cdn.sos.ca.gov/pdf/2023-sos-outreach-report.pdf>
 - Anakaren Monroy
 - AB 545 – Would allow voters with disabilities to vote on a regular ballot outside the polling location. Signed by Governor on October 10.
 - Fred clarified that AB 545 also includes including signage.
 - AB 626 – Would allow voters to return VBM ballots to any in-person voting location without placing the ballot in an envelope. Signed by Governor on October 8.
 - AB 969 – This bill would prohibit an elections official from performing a manual vote count in a semifinal official canvass pursuant to the above procedures in any contest

held on an established election date, as specified, where there are more than 1,000 registered voters eligible to participate in that election as of 154 days in advance of the election, or in any contest held on a date other than an established election date, where there are more than 5,000 registered voters eligible to participate in that election as of 154 days in advance of the election. The bill would only allow an elections official to conduct a manual vote count for a semifinal official canvass in a precinct pursuant to the above procedures if the count is conducted pursuant to a plan approved by the Secretary of State, as specified. The bill would require the Secretary of State to adopt regulations regarding manual vote counts. Signed by Governor on October 4. Takes effect immediately.

- Susan Lapsley informed the committee that the SOS has a successful bidder for Polling Place Accessibility Trainings. The company is called BlueDAG and SOS staff have met with them twice to begin planning.
- Received HAVA funding and are drafting contracts with counties for them to receive funding for accessibility.

4. VAAC Working Groups

- County VAACs
 - Jan Bell, Fred Nisen, and Larry Smith attended a meeting with John Arntz from San Francisco and Dean Logan from Los Angeles to discuss VAAC recruitment.
 - The working group has reached out to voter advocacy groups who can participate in the VAAC.
 - Fred Nisen has best practices for recruitment and the plan is to update them and to send them to the SOS for approval to send to counties.
 - Veronica Elsea suggested that the working group needs to reach out to voters that are impacted. Jan Bell agreed with Veronica Elsaie that they need to make sure outreach to voters that are impacted continues.

5. VAAC Working Group Document Updates

- Ryan Reece informed the VAAC that the SOS is still working on reviewing documents that have been recommended by the VAAC committee.
- AB 398 has been signed and Ryan Reece will review the emergency voting document to check if any changes need to be made because of the bill.
- VAAC Toolkit is updated on the SOS website with the 2023 version.
- Jan Bell asked about letters to be sent out to political parties to provide their statement of purpose in American Sign Language (ASL). Ryan Reece said that SOS is still working on this.

- Fred Nisen asked about RAVBM FAQs document. Ryan Reece said they are still reviewing the one recommended by the VAAC committee and that the CACEO Voters With Specific Needs Subcommittee also has made updates to theirs and the SOS is reviewing both.

6. VAAC Member Recruitment for 2024-2025 Term

- Current term is ending, and the SOS has issued a new application and CCROV that was posted October 17:
<https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ccrov/2023/october/23101rr.pdf>
- Veronica Elsea asked for the application to be mailed to the current VAAC members, and if SOS would like members to share the application with their contacts.
- Fred Nisen asked when the applications are due. Ryan said November 10.
- Ryan Reece mentioned that meetings will change for next term, because there will be a required physically accessible location for each meeting.
[SB 544](#)
- Susan Lapsley asked the members to please share the application with their contacts.

7. Safe at Home Program Updates

- Ryan Reece informed that Safe at Home was not able to attend today's meeting, but wanted to provide an update that Safe at Home now has a confidential voter card for individuals who are visually impaired.
- NaKasha Robinson mentioned that her team is continuing to look at ways RAVBM can be leveraged to accommodate Safe at Home voters.

8. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

- There were no public comments.
- Future Agenda Items
 - OVSTA updates on any testing.
 - VAAC Working Group document updates.

9. Adjournment