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### Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

#### Meeting Minutes

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

VAAC members present:

- Fred Nisen
- Dianne Russell
- Jan Bell
- Larry Smith
- Mary Helen Gallegos

Members of SOS:

- Liz Hall – Safe at Home
- Santiago Perez – Safe at Home
- Debra Ledsinger – OVSTA

Members of the Public:

- Karie Lewis – Disability Rights CA

Quorum was met.

## 2. VAAC Members Community Outreach Updates

- Fred Nisen
  - They are preparing for the next election, with outreach meetings and local VAAC meetings.
  - Fred Nisen also participated in a legislative informational hearing about voter participation last month.
- Jan Bell
  - Jan Bell has started working with DCARA, a deaf and hard-of-hearing advocacy group in San Leandro. They have offered feedback to Jan Bell about the process of voting for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, including the importance of using ASL for voting communications.

- Dianne Russell
  - No updates.
- Larry Smith
  - They are preparing for the next election, with outreach efforts including a public demonstration of what a vote center will look like and how it will operate.
- Mary Helen Gallegos
  - They are readying for the March election, including holding a demonstration for blind and visually impaired support groups on voting, which included collecting feedback from the community.

### 3. SOS Updates

- Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)
  - Debra Ledsinger gave an update on OVSTA testing:
    - Tenex Precinct Central Touchpad Version 6.01 is currently in testing.
    - KnowInk PollPad 3 Version 3.4.8 is currently in testing.
    - RunBeck Novis Version 6.3 is currently in testing.
    - Dominion Democracy Suite 5.19 Voting System is currently in testing.
    - Dominion Democracy Suite Ballot-on-Demand system 5.19 was approved on December 11.
    - Dominion Democracy Suite RAVBM 5.19 is in an application review.
    - ES&S Ballotar 3.0.5.1 is in an application review.
    - ES&S Ballot on Demand System 1.0 is in an application review.
    - Hart Verity Voting 3.2 RC Tab is in an application review.
    - ES&S EVS 6.3.0.2 Voting System is in post-testing.
  - Dianne Russell asked why there are so many different voting machines. Debra Ledsinger replied that different jurisdictions have the option of choosing which system best supports their needs.
  - Fred Nisen asked if new dates have been scheduled for accessibility testing of the Dominion system that is still in testing. Debra Ledsinger replied that dates have not been scheduled but she will follow up with the VAAC when those change.
- Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
  - There was no one from the VCA team available to provide an update.
- Legislation
  - There was no one from the Legislation team available to provide an update, but an update was provided via email from Ted Mulhauser.
  - The update mentioned that the Legislature will be reconvening in early

January and will begin to review two-year legislation and prepare new laws.

- SOS has not yet provided the Legislature with recommendations for new laws. If any member of the VAAC has a suggestion or comment, please refer them to Ted at [tmulhaus@sos.ca.gov](mailto:tmulhaus@sos.ca.gov).

#### 4. VAAC Working Groups

- County VAACs
  - There were no updates from the working group.
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing
  - Jan Bell provided an update regarding the group's discussion about using new technology for assistance for voters, including AI tools. There are concerns in the ASL community about some of these tools and whether they are ready to be of use for voters.
  - Rather than using AI or advanced computer tools, community members have recommended using videos with ASL translations to communicate to Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing voters.
  - It was mentioned that providing deaf and hard-of-hearing voters with information about when ASL translators will be on site in polling places could be very helpful for assisting these voters with casting ballots.
    - Fred Nisen pushed back against the idea that deaf and hard-of-hearing voters should be limited to voting at certain times when ASL interpreters will be available at a voting location.
  - Fred Nisen would like ASL to be included in the interpretation services provided by SOS and the counties to voters.
  - It was pointed out that there are extra costs for the counties to produce the ASL services that Fred Nisen was advocating for, and that these services are not always utilized to the degree that would support the costs.
  - Pop-up services for the ASL community were advocated as an alternative. There was further discussion about the most effective and cost-efficient ways to reach out to deaf and hard-of-hearing voters and encourage participation.
    - It was pointed out that ASL is not a required language for the counties. However, Fred Nisen reminded that, nevertheless, ASL interpreters are considered required "auxiliary aids and services" under Title II of the ADA.

#### 5. VAAC Working Group Document Updates

- Ryan Reece updated the VAAC about recent work in the Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM) working group to create a best practices document that was commented on by disability advocates.
- Mary Helen Gallegos asked for an update about another document, the

Disability Sensitivity worksheet. Ryan Reece responded that the document is nearly completed and that it will be sent out via a CCROV prior to the March election.

- There is also a questionnaire produced by Veronica concerning signature verification that is completed and will be reviewed by Ryan Reece soon.
- Another document to communicate political parties' statement of purpose in ASL is being prepared as well. Fred Nisen asked about the possibility of getting this done by the primary, but it is likely to be ready for the November general election.

#### **6. Safe at Home Program Updates**

- Liz Hall and Santiago Perez from the Safe at Home program at SOS joined to answer questions from the VAAC.
- Santiago Perez talked about how the program works with RAVBM, which is mainly in communicating with counties about the enrolled voters and making sure that any ballots collected by SOS are forwarded properly to the counties. Safe-at-Home does not have any further role in the actual voting process.
- Fred Nisen asked about how a person signs up for the program and how they vote. Liz Hall spoke about how voters apply for the program with SOS. Upon being approved, a voter registration card is then sent to the individual, and then the completed form is forwarded to the county which is responsible for adding the voters to the rolls as a protected voter.
- Fred Nisen asked about how blind voters can apply for the program. Santiago Perez responded that a PDF is sent via email to blind voters for them to complete. Signatures for the voters are created by an electronic device and in nearly all cases the signatures are accepted, and, if not, then the voter is contacted.

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

- Fred Nisen asked about applications for the VAAC for the coming year. Ryan Reece responded that the applications have been submitted and recommendations for appointments will be sent to the Secretary soon. More information will be coming soon.
- Fred Nisen also asked how many applications were submitted. Ryan Reece said that at least nine have been submitted.

#### **8. Adjournment**