

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Workgroup Recommendation
Send a letter to each political party requesting they produce an ASL video with captioning
of their Statement of Purpose

DRAFT LETTER – Secretary of State to finalize

The **California Secretary of State’s Voter Accessibility Advisory Council (VAAC) Workgroup focused on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing community** has recommended a special project to improve this community’s voting accessibility in California elections.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates California has 6,734,666 disabled individuals, 5% of which are deaf or have serious difficulty hearing or 336,733 individuals statewide (Source: https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/pdfs/California_Disability.pdf)

When the VAAC investigated the Deaf & Hard of Hearing community’s voting experience, they discovered that most members of this community do not vote. Their first barrier to voting was confusion over how to register to vote. The SOS addressed this issue in 2020 with a video with captioning, using an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, which explains how to fill out the California registration form. You can see that video online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xuu0ByH9sJk>

Their second barrier to voting was their lack of understanding regarding the difference between political parties and therefore they didn’t know how to respond to the registration form’s section regarding political preference.

To assist the deaf community’s voting access, we are reaching out to the Chairs of all six California political parties asking them to create an ASL video with captioning of their Party’s Statement of Purpose (currently posted in English on the Secretary of State’s website at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/political-parties/party-statements>). While the texts of these Statements of Purpose are posted online, many Deaf citizens rely on American Sign Language as their language and are not proficient in English.

Our request is that your organization produce a video with captioning of your Statement of Purpose with an ASL interpreter, like the California SOS video on How to Register to Vote, in time for the 2024 Primary Election. If you plan to update your Statement of Purpose prior to the 2024 election, we recommend you record the most current version of your Statement of Purpose for this ASL video.

To assist you in this project there is excellent information online provided by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. as to how to produce this type of video at <https://rid.org/membership/benefits/publications-overview/views/video-submission-guidelines/> Also, there is good advice about captioning from the National Association of the Deaf at <https://www.nad.org/resources/technology/captioning-for-access/what-is-captioning/>

In the Sacramento area, NorCal Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is part of California’s Deaf Access Program Sign Language Interpreter Service. You can reach NorCal for their advice on local interpreters at (916) 349-7525 or dispatch@norcalcenter.org

We look forward to your reply with your organization’s commitment to produce such an ASL video with captioning and the name of the person you assign to this project. We are here to assist you with this project, so just email or call us with questions.

Thank you for your attention to this important voter accessibility concern of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing community.