

The Voter's Choice Act (VCA), enacted through Senate Bill 450 in 2016, authorized participating counties to adopt a modernized election model designed to increase voter access, convenience, and participation. The model expanded vote-by-mail, introduced countywide vote centers, and provided multiple ballot return options. The adoption of the bill authorized 14 counties to pilot the new voting model beginning in 2018, allowing all counties to move to the new model in 2020. 30 of California's 58 counties have adopted the VCA model and conducted the 2025 November Special Election using this model.¹

Commented [JR1]: The drop box and VCA # of registered voter thresholds should be included somewhere (i.e., 15K and 50K/10K, respectively on the 11-day and 4 day module).

SB 1450 also requires mailed direct contacts to go at least once to voters sharing a surname and address in each requested language, requires vote centers to post information about available county or Secretary of State language-assistance services and hotlines, and - through 2029 - requires counties with more than 500,000 registered voters to establish a Voter Education and Outreach Advisory Committee and hold at least one dedicated public meeting on voter education and outreach during development of the Election Administration Plan.^[1] Just as importantly, it creates a more defined pipeline for community input by requiring Language Accessibility Advisory Committees and Voter Accessibility Advisory Committees to meet before the public planning meeting and requiring that meeting to occur before the draft Election Administration Plan is noticed, helping ensure affected communities have a meaningful opportunity to shape the plan before it is finalized. SB 1450 also sets a firm 120-day pre-election deadline for final Election Administration Plans, requires counties to post election cost reports within nine months of certification, requires the Secretary of State to submit its final report within six months after each election, and reestablishes a standing taskforce to review each VCA election and report recommendations to the Legislature.

Commented [JR2]: Different font than the rest of the document.

Commented [JR3]: The Voter's Choice Act (VCA), enacted through Senate Bill 450 in 2016, authorized participating counties to adopt a modernized election model designed to increase voter access, convenience, and participation. The model expanded vote-by-mail, introduced countywide vote centers, and provided multiple ballot return options. [The VCA builds in oversight and accountability by requiring public engagement on outreach plans, review by the Secretary of State, and county reporting on VCA-related election costs.](#) The adoption of the bill authorized 14 counties to pilot the new voting model beginning in 2018, allowing all counties to move to the new model in 2020. [Thirty](#)³⁰ of California's 58 counties have [since](#) adopted the VCA model and conducted the 2025 November Special Election using this model.

The VCA sets a strong statutory floor for voter access. In addition to establishing minimum requirements for ballot drop-off locations and vote centers, it creates a baseline for accessible voting equipment, voter services, language assistance, outreach, and accessibility. It is especially geared toward communities that have historically faced barriers, requiring counties to account for factors like proximity to public transportation, disability access, low-income communities, low vehicle ownership, and historically low vote-by-mail use when siting vote centers and drop boxes. And through the Election Administration Plan, the Act makes those obligations public and enforceable by requiring a detailed process of

^{1 [1]} [The August 31, 2024, Senate Elections Committee's Floor Analysis notes that the VEOAC is modeled after one in San Mateo County that gathers community feedback, advises county elections officials on voter education and outreach strategies, and proposes recommendations for better assisting voters.](#)

noticed meetings, public comment, draft revision, accessible publication, and state review.

The Voter's Choice Act (VCA) allows counties in California to replace Election Day neighborhood poll sites with a reduced number of multi-day vote centers. All vote centers must be open for at least four days starting the Saturday before Election Day, with a portion being opened eleven days. Voters in a VCA county can vote at any vote center in their county, while voters in non-VCA counties must vote at their designated poll site. Initially, only VCA counties were required to mail registered voters in the county a ballot in the mail, but beginning in 2022, all counties are required to mail a ballot at least 29 days before an election. At all voting locations, whether a neighborhood poll site or a vote center, additional services are provided to support voters. Both offer services such as providing voters the ability to register and vote a provisional ballot, translated election materials and interpretation, accessible voting machines, and the ability to drop off a ballot received in the mail. The VCA requires counties to create an Election Administration Plan, to conduct outreach and education to voters, and to create Language Accessibility Advisory Committees and Voter Accessibility Advisory Committees.

According to the legislative analysis of Senate Bill 450, the purpose of the VCA is to increase voter participation. The bill author based the VCA on Colorado's election model given the high rate of participation in that state. Instead of requiring everyone to vote on Election Day during the hours of 7am and 8pm, voters are given options. All voters receive a ballot in the mail and are provided multiple days and multiple ways to cast a ballot, choosing the most convenient way for them. The VCA includes more than a dozen factors that counties must consider in selecting vote centers and drop boxes. And because vote centers are staffed for multiple days, proponents of SB 450 pointed to the benefit of having smoothly run in-person voting.

Because new equipment and additional planning is required to implement the VCA, the upfront cost to run an election is significant. The state and counties incur ongoing cost to implement the various components of the VCA.

	Neighborhood Poll Site	Vote Center
Ballots in the Mail	All voters receive a ballot in the mail	All voters receive a ballot in the mail
In-Person Voting	Open on Election Day	Open at least 4 days, including Election Day. Some required to be open 11 days. However, far fewer vote centers than neighborhood poll sites.

Commented [JR4]: Polling place counties that use electronic voter rosters containing all voters in the county and that upload all ballot styles onto their accessible ballot marking devices can allow a voter visiting the wrong polling place to vote a non-provisional ballot for their precinct. Polling place counties that use electronic voter rosters containing all voters in the county and that upload all ballot styles onto their accessible ballot marking devices can allow a voter visiting the wrong polling place to vote a non-provisional ballot for their precinct.

Commented [JR5]: Urgency bill for 2020 General Election, then urgency bill for 2021 and then another bill for all elections after 1/1/2022

Commented [JR6]: •Prefer "accessible ballot marking devices"

I prefer to avoid using the phrase "voting machine" since the equipment does not store the voter's voting choices, it just assists a voter with marking and printing a paper ballot that must separately be tabulated.

Commented [JR7]: The Voter's Choice Act (VCA) allows counties in California to replace Election Day neighborhood poll sites with a reduced number of multi-day vote centers. [Vote centers open on a staggered schedule: some begin operating 10 days before Election Day, and all vote centers must be open by the 4-day window before Election Day. Counties must provide 11](#) ...

Commented [JR8]: The VCA requires counties to create an Election Administration Plan, to conduct outreach and education to voters, and to create Language Accessibility Advisory Committees and Voter Accessibility Advisory ...

Commented [JR9]: Polling place counties now must also develop a voter education and outreach plan

Commented [JR10]: Analysis said the bill provided an opportunity for increased voter participation and cost savings. How valuable is the turnout comparison with ...

Commented [JR11]: Statute requires ballot drop off locations. The use of a box is at the discretion of the county elections official.

Commented [JR12]: For county that adopted VCA when purchasing a new voting system in 2019, the one-time cost was less than it would have been to equip a larger number of polling places.

Commented [JR13]: Could also compare requirement for accessible ballot marking devices. Polling places must have at least one and vote centers must have at least three.

Commented [JR14]: Every precinct must be assigned to a polling place but a polling place can serve more than one precinct. "Far fewer" may be an overstatement.

In-Person Voting	In-person voters must go to a designated neighborhood poll site	In-person voters can go to any vote center in the county
Drop Boxes	Required, minimum 2	Drop boxes provided at each vote center and in additional locations throughout the county
Toll-Free Language Hotline		Requires a hotline for languages be available to voters and the number be posted at voter centers
		Election Administration Plans including outreach and education plans
Community Committees		Creating of Language Accessibility Advisory Committees AACs and VAACs

The VCA Taskforce has been appointed by the California Secretary of State. The Taskforce is currently comprised of 15 members, representing county election officials and individuals with experience in the field of elections, including experience working on disability and language access issues. Beginning in 2025, the California Secretary of State's VCA Taskforce is charged with reviewing VCA elections and providing comments and recommendations to the Legislature

Commented [JR15]: In-Person Voting
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Commented [JR16R15]: •Could also compare requirement for accessible ballot marking devices Polling places must have at least one and vote centers must have at least three.
 •And one location for at least six hours on E-3
 •Every precinct must be assigned to a polling place but a polling place can serve more than one precinct. "Far fewer" may be an overstatement.

Commented [JR17]: Electronic poll books and accessible ballot marking devices allow a voter to be served at a different polling place.

Commented [JR18]: 1 per 30,000 voters

Commented [JR19]: Statute says a Vote Center cannot be used to meet the 1 per 15,000 requirement.

Commented [JR20]: he left side should include a header for the EAP. It reference on the right side, but should have a header on the left as well since it is unique to VCA models.