

**California Secretary of State
Voter's Choice Task Force**

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 11, 2026 | 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

1. Welcome, Call to Order: 2:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Task Force Members Present: Chair Petrina Branch, Chair Donna Linder, Dora Rose, Melvin E. Levey, Matt Moreles, Deanna Kitamura, Carrie Cornwell, Ethan Jones, Gabriel Taylor, Evelyn Mendez, Art Tinoco, Bob Page, Dean Logan, Jesse Salinas, Bob Page, Camila Chavez

Absent: Leslie Hernandez, Ellen Nash, Brittany Stonesifer

Declaration of Quorum

SOS Briana Ricketts-Beck declared a quorum was reached.

2. Comments: General Public Items Not on the Agenda
Chair Donna Linder invited public comments. The following comments were made:
No public comments.

3. Discussion and Possible Action: Task Force Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2026
Recommendation for Action: Staff recommend the Task Force adopt the minutes of the meeting of May 14, 2026.

In a motion by Petrina Branch, seconded by Matt Morales, and carried on a 12-0 vote, the meeting minutes from May 14, 2026 were approved.

AYES: Chair Petrina Branch, Chair Donna Linder, Melvin E. Levey, Matt Moreles, Deanna Kitamura, Gabriel Taylor, Evelyn Mendez, Art Tinoco, Bob Page, Dean Logan, Bob Page, Jesse Salinas

ABSTAIN: Dora Rose, Camila Chavez

ABSENT for vote: Leslie Hernandez, Ellen Nash, Brittany Stonesifer

4. Review of VoteCal Data Subcommittee

- Dora Rose asked where the UCLA data is.
 - i. SOS Josh Robinson noted it is nearing completion, along with the Sac State data. They should be expected by the end of the month.
- Gabriel Taylor asked if there is a list that shows what different categories VoteCal data captures.
 - i. SOS Jana Lean noted that if he is able to provide what he is specifically looking for, she can look into it. Otherwise, VoteCal is such an extensive source of data that it's difficult to provide a specific list of variables.
- Dora Rose also noted that she does not recall if this supplemental report captures information about late-arriving ballots from USPS not being counted, and which counties they were in.
 - i. SOS Jana Lean noted that it's not in VoteCal, but that information is available on the SOS website.
 - ii. Dora said a paragraph ought to be included in this report about the ballot rejection rates related to postmarks, given this is the first election under the new USPS postmark rules.
 - iii. SOS Josh Robinson said that that information can be shared with the Task Force after this meeting, in case they would like to include.
 - iv. Dean Logan cautioned about semantics, that "ballot rejection" implies something more nefarious than ballots arriving/postmarked too late.
 - 1. Jesse Salinas emphasizes the importance about this point.
 - v. Ethan Jones asked if SOS can break out data specific to ballot rejection rates relative to "postmarked too late" versus "received after E+7."
 - 1. SOS Jana Lean will see what we can do.
 - vi. Chair Donna Linder asked if there is enough current information about postmarks to make a determination or provide guidance in the report.
 - vii. Dean Logan asked if the postmark issue is pertinent to a report about VCA, given postmark changes are a statewide experience and not specific to VCA. Covering this issue in this report may be expanding the scope too much.
 - 1. Dora Rose defended covering it in the report because it does impact all elections, including VCA. It's salient, even though it's not unique.

2. Mel Levey speaks as a county that saw impact from the postmark changes, so he sees that there is a conversation to be had. This report may not be the right method to influence USPS changes, but it can be something to include in the report's scope going forward. It would be too buried in this report as-is.
3. Jesse Salinas is in agreement with both Dean and Mel: it expands the scope too much, and it is an issue the Task Force should consider going forward.
4. Bob Page reinforced what Mel said, that if we bring up this issue, it ought to be compared to the 2024 General, which had the lowest number of ballots challenged for being too late. It's a function of voter motivation/awareness of deadlines.
5. Deanna Kitamura emphasized that voter radius relative to post offices needs to be considered.
6. Dora Rose is concerned about how certain communities were disproportionately affected by postmark changes – but is OK considering this issue more intentionally moving forward to the June 2026 Primary report.

In a motion by Matt Morales and seconded by Jesse Salinas, the Task Force approved the supplemental report based on VoteCal data.

5. Future Task Force Schedule

- SOS Josh Robinson explained that given we are entering a new election's report, there is an opportunity to change the date/frequency/timing of the Task Force meetings. Members should expect a survey forthcoming.
- Chair Donna Linder asked when the Primary report is due: SOS confirmed December 2, 2026.
 - Chair Petrina Branch suggested having two meetings in October and November.
 - Dora Rose asked Ethan Jones if it's possible to add report time extensions to the existing noncontroversial omnibus elections bill currently being considered by the Legislature.
 - Ethan noted the deadline is there so it is useful for the Legislature to consider changes – but it can be a possible item to consider for the future.

- Jesse Salinas asked if Ethan can ask the Legislature if they'd consider an extension for the end of January.
- Chair Donna Linder asked SOS if the timeline is the same for SOS reports. SOS Josh Robinson confirmed yes, but the delay for the Special comes from internal team transitions and securing contracts. It should be a smoother process going forward.
- Matt Morales suggested doing two meetings in August & September, instead of October and November.
 - Chair Petrina Branch suggested the team can determine what can be worked on early.
 - Matt Morales noted a lot of the context about this election can be discussed and written first, and then data can be plugged in once received.
 - SOS Josh Robinson also noted that the Task Force can explore the reports available on the SOS website to start to determine trends they would like to explore.

6. Lessons Learned

- Chair Petrina Branch noted that the Task Force learned over time that instead of giving comments in real time during the meeting, it worked better to provide comments to SOS ahead of time and then review them during the meeting. Also, the team needs to factor in that the data reports from SOS will likely come later than expected.
- Jesse Salinas asked SOS that now that the team has a framework in place, can data be provided earlier?
 - SOS Jana Lean explained that at E+60, data is still being reconciled with counties – so data cannot be pulled earlier from VoteCal. Then it needs to be analyzed, provided to university partners, etc., and it all takes time. We need to be legally complying with the law, but also we can explore providing drafts of data for the Task Force to analyze.
 - Given this, Jesse suggested the Task Force meets once during late August and two in September.
 - Team suggests one meeting in late August, two in September, two in October.
 - SOS Josh Robinson reminded the team about the upcoming university reports and asked if they would like to meet in July. Regardless, SOS will circulate the reports and perhaps the subcommittee can draft a report.

- Bob Page noted that he would be interested in meeting with the university researchers to learn how they analyzed the data. Just receiving the reports would not be enough. Dora Rose agreed and would appreciate a presentation. SOS Josh Robinson will ask.
- Dora Rose noted that the team may have to contend with a few things in this next report, including the Watson decision, USPS postmarks, etc.
 - Dean Logan asked again what the legislative scope of this committee and this report is supposed to be. That can help narrow and zero in when writing the report.

7. Future Agenda Items

- Chair Donna Linder invited future agenda items from the Task Force. None additional to what was noted above were added.
- Public comment:
 - Rhonda Provost thanked the committee for the hard work they've put in to this report. She is also disappointed that the data is not yet available, and she hopes everyone has wonderful vacations.

8. Adjournment

Chair Donna Linder adjourned the meeting at 3:07 p.m.