

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

**Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 5, 2026, | 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

1. Welcome, Call to Order: 2:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Task Force Members Present: Dora Rose, Chair Petrina Branch, Deanna Kitamura, Melvin Levey, Art Tinoco, Donna Linder (late), Leslie Hernandez, Bob Page, Gabriel Taylor, Ellen Nash, Matt Moreles, Jesse Salinas (late), Evelyn Mendez, Brittany Stonesifer.

Non-Voting Members Present: Carrie Cornwell, Ethan Jones

Absent: Camila Chavez, Dean Logan

Declaration of Quorum

Chair Petrina Branch declared a quorum was reached.

2. Comments: General Public Items Not on the Agenda

Chair Petrina Branch invited public comments. The following comments were made:

Rhonda Provost: Comment was made in last meetings minutes. It is important that you have a perspective that she mentioned in another meeting with regards to not seeing the goal of achieving attendance with VCA. She wants to repair and restore confidence at the county level. Ballot security and safety is what she holds front and center. Article written by the NY Times. Written on the same day from a previous Task Force meeting. Reading from the article from the NY times.

No other public comments.

3. Discussion and Possible Action: Task Force Meeting Minutes of Feb. 19, 2026

Recommendation for Action: Staff recommend the Task Force adopt the minutes of the meeting of Feb. 19, 2026.

No corrections, comments, or changes.

In a motion by Petrina Branch and carried on a 10-0 vote, Task Force members approved the minutes.

AYES: Dora Rose, Petrina Branch, Melvin Levey, Leslie Hernandez, Bob Page, Gabriel Taylor, Matt Moreles, Evelyn Mendez, Brittany Stonesifer

NOES: None

ABSENT: Art Tinoco, Donna Linder (late), Camila Chavez, Dean Logan, Jesse Salinas (late)

ABSTAIN: Deanna Kitamura

4. Unusual Nature of the Special Election Subcommittee – Discussion of draft section of the November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election Legislative Report

Document being shared on screen that is being hosted on the Secretary of State's website.

Dora Rose: I just have a process question. Is the Secretary of State's office just gonna sort of pull all of that together, and then we'll see it in a draft later. I misunderstood I thought we were going to review that material. What happens with all of that?

Gabriel Taylor: Trying to make sure that in the planning for special elections and the rollout of special elections, making sure that the requirements include opportunities for voters with disabilities. Also provide the counties with feedback during the planning stages. Make sure that there is enough time and options do that are accessible. Conversations that his team at the DRC has had. Questions and concerns that the DRC received about what people are worried about.

Dora Rose: She anticipates that there will be edits about this document. They Tried to explain the complexity of it from every perspective. Probably needs an elections official's touch.

Bob Page: What are the expectations for the turnout for special elections? Curious what the typical turnout for a special election is.

Dora Rose: It exceeded "expectations" drawn from prior experience.

Petrina Branch: People can submit comments or questions at [voterschoice@sos.ca.gov](mailto:voterschoice@sos.ca.gov) and the subcommittee members will take the input and revise the draft, and it will come back.

Rhonda Provost: Made a comment about a change needed for the history portion. Jesse asked if this was all elections or just the special and this is just the special.

Petrina Branch: Revisits previous comments about providing feedback.

No other comments.

5. Purpose and History of the VCA Subcommittee – Review of edits from February 19, 2026

Document being shared is on the Secretary of State's website.

- Petrina Branch: First comment suggests different font than the rest of the document.
- Bob page: Reviews why he wrote the comment on “while voters in non-VCA counties must vote at their designated poll site”.
- Dora Rose: Are there still some counties that are not VCA counties, but doing a hybrid model?
- Bob Page: I think the recent changes to the law effective January this year that now require polling place counties to have at least one location that's open for in-person voting on the Saturday before Election Day for 6 hours has given some counties a little bit more of authority to allow in-person voting beyond just that Saturday, now that it's not just limited to Election Day.
- Deanna Kitamura: Do most counties have electronic rosters.
- Bob Page: Not sure. At the next meeting he can post what each county uses.
- Deanna Kitamura: When SB 450 passed, did Orange County have an electronic roster at that point?
- Bob Page: We used paper rosters prior to 2020. I get your point if we want to structure this as more historical as long as we make note that this is historical and times have changed.
- Deanna Kitamura: I can make a footnote saying that this is historical and times have changed.
- Bob Page: Wanted to make sure it was known that mailing all voter's a ballot started in 2020 for the General Election.
- Deanna Kitamura: I can put a footnote that times have changed, kind of thing, you know, in terms of updates
- Melvin: Hard to get voter turnout for elections unless it is something they care about.
- Bob: in the larger context of continuing to discuss how we improve it, we participate because we think it has value, and we want to find ways to improve it. Vote centers is just one piece of turnout.
- Dora Rose: Call attention to Brittany's comment in the chat. Very important point to make is that if you want to put a footnote in the document about it being historical, then it's fine from her perspective.
- Bob: May be getting ahead of himself with his comments in the beginning section of this document. We should keep this focused on history and not how it's currently being ran.

Next comment section

- Bob: Pointing out that it was a significant cost to swap to VCA. There was a cost avoidance. Orange county had to buy equipment for 200 vote centers.

Next comment section

- Bob: Looked at the things that were mentioned. Polling place counties only have to have 1 and VCA has to have 3.

Next comment section

- Bob: Polling place counties do have to have 1 drop off location per 30,000 voters. Doesn't consider a vote center a drop off location.
- Dora: Could count a drop box outside the vote center.
- Ethan: I would agree with what Bob said earlier. Not the intent to have the VCs count as drop-off locations.

Next comment section

- Dora: Think this came from the beginning of the document. Blue is adding, red is striking out. Thought it was important to point out the oversight of the introduction of the document.
- Ethan: It was 29 that used the VCA model for the 2025 special election. 30 adopted moving forward.

Next comment section

- Dora: Trying to outline the staggered schedule.
- Deanna: Do people want us to add code sections in the report?
- Dora: I don't think it's necessary. Added it into my comment to show people where I found that information.

Next comment section

- Dora: Next one isn't exactly history. I think it's helpful to have it in there so people can see old history (think that's what she said).

Next comment section

- Dora: Just more SB 1450 stuff. Put in a footnote about the new idea of the voter education and outreach committee history.

Next comment section

- Dora: I wanted to flush out a little bit about what the VCA does and the requirements. Wanted to make clear that is a floor. Counties can, and often do, go beyond it.
- Deanna: Are we able to get access to the individual comments that Dora.
- Joshua: Let me look at Bagley Keene and make sure. The SOS should be able to add in the new comments in track changes and send the document to the whole committee.

Next comment section

- Donna Linder: Make a comment on Dora's paragraph about the law requiring two direct voters. That code also has a clause that it's not just 6

statewide elections, but it's per voter as well. Maybe make an edit to that comment?

- Jesse Salinas: For those who were involved with the legislation was there an understanding that if I've done 6 elections and I can repivot to use some funds towards a different kind of outreach, it is challenging, in terms of that, but it... I'm just curious, because it does kind of limit the creativity, we can do on our end with resources and redirecting them. I think there is an opportunity for that particular issue to be revisited so that those of us who can do some more, kind of, focused, type of outreach to working with CBOs, working with community-based organizations. In that context, to focus on those communities that are low-propensity voters.
- Deanna: A little outside of the scope. We are just talking about the draft currently. Maybe we just chat about the issues from legislation instead.
- Evelyn Mendez: If we are doing a formatting edit/question, do we put that in the document being shared? Are we calling them drop boxes or official drop boxes throughout the entire thing? It changes throughout.

Next comment section about EAP comment

- Bob: The challenge we're having is we're looking at the comments and not the document. I think what this person is saying is that there should be a column for EAPs.
- Evelyn: Asking about standardizing what everything is called throughout the document.
- Deanna: What do we want the standard to be.
- Evelyn: Has to be official drop box. Can't put it in a box.
- Bob: Statute just says drop off locations.
- Donna: 4005.b says ballot box and that's why I call it that.
- Petrina: Should we create a definition section?
- Evelyn: I think that would be a good idea. Are we talking about the same thing? Are we talking about a secure box? Are we talking about a location?
- Corey O'Hayre: Bob mentioned the difference between polling places and VCs that you have to have 3 accessible machines. Inconsistent that polling places only have to have 1.
- Deanna reiterates what Joshua said early about sharing the comments and changes to the master document and circulate it back to the task force. I wasn't here last meeting, but it looks like people made concerns about the document. Is that going to be captured too?
- Joshua: I think that that would be on the subcommittee to kind of incorporate those as they see fit.
- Rhonda: Will this be made available to the public as well?
- Joshua: Yes, we will post it to the website with track changes on.
- Petrina: Comments should be submitted in both sections.

## 6. Future Agenda Items and Other Comments: Task Force Members

Next meeting set for Mar. 19, 2026 from 2:00-3:30 p.m.

- Topic: Unusual Nature of the Special Election
- Updated draft of the Purpose and History of the VCA Subcommittee

No public comments

Bob: Make a comment about the NY Times editorial about how long it takes California to complete canvas. The NY Times editorial was talking about California's canvas is too long which is not specific to VCA counties. All counties have to do the same thing during canvas.

Petrina: Question for SOS staff. When will the university reports and votecal data be made available.

Joshua: Soon. We are working on it.

## 7. Adjournment

Chair Petrina Branch adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.