

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

**Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 19, 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 Donna Linder, Melvin E. Levey, Evelyn Mendez, Matt Moreles, Gabriel Taylor, Leslie Hernandez, Dora Rose, Jesse Salinas, Chair Petrina Branch, Brittany Stonesifer, Deanna Kitamura, Art Tinoco, Bob Page, Ellen Nash, Dean Logan

Non-Voting Members Present: Ethan Jones, Carrie Cornwell

Declaration of Quorum

Chair Petrina Branch 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 Mar. 5, 2026

Recommendation for Action: Staff recommend the Task Force adopt the minutes of the meeting of Mar. 5, 2026.

In a motion by Dora Rose, and seconded by Bob Page, and carried on a 14-0 vote, Task Force members approved the minutes.

AYES: Chair Donna Linder, Melvin E. Levey, Evelyn Mendez, Matt Moreles, Gabriel Taylor, Leslie Hernandez, Dora Rose, Jesse Salinas, Chair Petrina Branch, Deanna Kitamura, Art Tinoco, Bob Page, Ellen Nash, Brittany Stonesifer

NOES: None

ABSENT: Camila Chavez

ABSTAIN: Dean Logan

4. Introduction of the "Impact of the VCA on Accessibility, Flexibility, and Security" part of the report

Sharing of the draft document prepared by Dean Logan and Evelyn Mendez.

- Evelyn Mendez flagged that she and Dean did the best they could to speak to the VCA-wide experience, but flags for folks to review the document to ensure it represents all VCA counties, not just larger counties.
- Committee decides to wait for the document for received in email to review and will share comments at next meeting.
- Public comment from Rhonda Provost: asking that this document be posted publicly on the website so it can be reviewed. SOS Josh Robinson confirmed.

5. Review of the comments on the “Unusual Nature of the November 2025 Special Election” part of the report

- Page 1: Bob Page provided statistics of registered voter turnout for special elections since 2003. Dora Rose suggested adding those stats as a footnote on page 4 to enhance the numbers already there.
  - Gabriel Taylor reminds folks that since 2003 there have been a lot of efforts to increase voter turnout, so it is difficult to compare turnout numbers across time. (Such as the changes to Motor Voter.) Ethan Jones encouraged that if we include registered turnout numbers, to footnote that policy changes have occurred to increase the franchise.
  - A handful of committee members support keeping eligible voter turnout instead of registered, as is noted already on page 4.
- Page 1: Dean Logan notes that in addition to VCA being created to improve planning, outreach, and predictability, it also is built to be a more adaptable model (such as 2020 election). Additionally, questions around the meaning of “significant tension.”
  - Dora Rose suggested a sentence added: “The VCA also supports adaptability in unusual conditions, as seen in the successful administration of the 2020 election, but that adaptability still depends on adequate lead time, planning, and resourcing.”
  - Dora Rose also suggested replacing “these conditions were in significant tension...” with: “These conditions pulled in different directions—VCA implementation depends on deliberate planning and public engagement, while this election required rapid decisions under compressed deadlines.”
- Page 1: Bob Page encourages that we include the UOCAVA deadline on E-45.
  - Dora Rose suggested to add to the timeline paragraph: “The window was even tighter for UOCAVA compliance, which typically requires ballots to be transmitted by E-45.”

- Dora Rose also suggested: “The compressed timeline challenged any election model; for VCA counties it also compressed decisions about the vote center network and the public-facing planning and outreach processes the VCA is designed to support.”
- Page 2: Bob Page noted that part of the specialness of this election was that the Legislature waived the statutory deadlines for this election. That’s important to convey to the Legislature in this report because they need to see the consequences of waiving those requirements for if they are in a similar position in the future.
  - Brittany Stonsifer suggested: “Differed from that REQUIRED for a regularly scheduled election.” (“required” offered by Dean Logan)
- Page 2: Dean Logan noted that vote center ratios are not based on data, but instead on legislative negotiation.
  - Dora Rose suggested: “The vote center ratios reflect legislative balancing among access, cost, and administrative feasibility, informed by stakeholder input and negotiation.”
- Page 2: Dean Logan clarified that the special election actually increased the number of vote centers. Bob Page also noted that EC 4005 includes a subdivision (b) for special elections that ought to be reconsidered by the Legislature regarding the level of minimums.
  - Dean started workshopping some language and is willing to work on that offline.
  - Brittany Stonesifer suggested “Reduced relative to regularly scheduled, but increased relative to the 2021 special.”
  - Ethan Jones noted in chat that the 2021 special election had rules that differed from 4005(a) and (b) ratios.
    - Dean responded in chat that this is important because we lack apples-to-apples comparisons because the rules have varied based on the issue and political dynamic at play for each special election.
  - Dean also noted that even though the number of vote centers was different, the wait times were still pretty similar and predictable, such as longer wait times at universities.
  - Brittany noted that it’s not always universities with long lines. Perhaps more vote centers closer to each other in these high-impact places can help reduce that pressure?
    - Dean shared that even with 2-3 vote centers throughout a campus, folks still tend to flock to the main central one. But fortunately, those in line seem to be hyped about voting instead of frustrated.
    - Jesse Salinas supports Dean’s point about UC Davis.
    - Matt Morales says that their county’s experience with universities is the same. Other popular vote center locations: they set up more vote centers closer by and had county folks in line educating people where the other center is, but people still prefer their go-to vote center.

- Bob Page shared that they couldn't use their usual UC Irvine location, so they had to work with the university to find an alternative. That's the case across the board – the special election meant that the usual vote center locations weren't always available, which impacts voters. Furthermore, counties were already securing Primary 2026 locations before the Special 2025 was called, and that also impacted availability. There are consequences to waiving timelines!
  - Dora Rose suggested that Dean and Bob add a paragraph about all of this, that the unusual nature of this election impacted vote center availability.
  - Jesse said that the only reason he was able to secure the locations he did is because he had resource available to rent the spaces. That's not the case for all counties.
  - Mel Levey also highlighted that it is easier to secure a polling place location for a single Tuesday, versus 4 or 11 days under the VCA model.
- Page 3: Dean Logan said that lack of funding for outreach and education is not a unique function of VCA; it's all counties.
  - Deanna Kitamura emphasized it's important to still include this point.
  - Dora Rose suggested: "This is not unique to VCA elections; however, disparities in access to reliable, plain-language information tend to widen in off-cycle elections, and compressed timelines can amplify those disparities regardless of voting model."
- Page 3: Gabriel Taylor highlighted that the compressed timeline also impacted workshops hosted, such as for the disability community. This also affects voters' engagement and participation.
  - Bob Page noted that his county reads VCA as requiring workshops for the EAP renewal process, but not per election.
  - Dora Rose noted that even without a public workshop being required, the timeline can still impact LAACs and VAACs from meeting and weighing in.
  - Matt Morales suggested that we can add that the compressed timeline made counties less able to be responsive to community suggestions and recommendations due to less opportunity for feedback to get gathered and the other responsibilities required to get done (like lining up vote centers).
  - Dora Rose suggested: "limiting the opportunity for community feedback and elections office ability to be as responsive as they might have liked."
  - Gabriel Taylor also said this impacts advocacy/CBO group education efforts to inform the community.
- Page 3: Bob Page reminded folks that 2022 was the last time state funding was available for VCA counties, so talking about lack of funding here might not be as applicable.

- Dora Rose suggested adding: “Targeted state funding for VCA voter education and outreach has been limited and inconsistent; for example, dedicated funding was last available in 2022 and was insufficient to cover even the minimum required direct contacts in many counties.”
- Jesse Salinas shared that money used to be provided to new VCA counties, but thinks that funding has since dried up.
- Committee asked SOS to confirm last time funding was available for VCA counties regarding outreach and education.
- Page 4: Dean Logan said that we already covered his idea, but we need to make sure legislators don’t think the problems can be solved by just having more vote centers.
  - Dora Rose suggested: “Long lines at particular vote centers can also occur in regular statewide elections, especially at high-traffic locations such as college campuses. The available public record does not, by itself, establish causation; county-level deployment and wait-time data are needed to assess whether and where capacity constraints were materially different under the November 2025 conditions.”
- Page 4: Bob Page noted that SB 280 waived two statutory requirements (EC 9040 and EC 12000).
  - Dora Rose suggested adding Bob’s point to the end of the second paragraph on page 1, about timeline.
  - Committee asked SOS to pull the content from Bob’s comment about the EC as a footnote.

## 6. Public Comment on this section of the report

Chair Donna Linder invited public comments. The following comments were made:

No public comments.

## 7. Final review of “Purpose and History of the Voters Choice Act”

- Deanna Kitamura noted that some further tweaking can be done, so is it possible to not have this be the final review?
  - Dora Rose asked if there can be a final-final review at the end? SOS confirmed that the final meeting will be that, reviewing the whole report together.
- Top of page 2: Deanne Kitamura noted that it can be fleshed out with more information that was similarly shared in the “Unusual Nature” section. Dora Rose shared that there are excellent SOS resources that can help.
- Page 3: Ethan Jones clarified that the Task Force has 16 members now.
- Public comment from Rhonda Provost: On 1<sup>st</sup> page, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, sentence ending with “designated poll site” that has a tiny footnote 1, yet no footnote exists. Is there something missing?
  - Deanna Kitamura confirmed the committee does not see a footnote either, so they will confirm.

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

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

- Topic: “Impact of the VCA on Accessibility, Flexibility, and Security”
- Subcommittee members: Dean Logan & Evelyn Mendez
- Petrina Branch asked if the VoteCal data or university reports are ready yet. SOS Josh Robinson confirmed it should be available by next meeting.
  - Bob Page recalls there was an earlier discussion about asking counties for special data for this report. (Deanna Kitamura clarified it was probably for wait times, though Donna Linder noted not all counties have that.) Is that still going to be an ask?
    - Bob has wait time data for this election (and this election only), if it’s wanted.

## 9. Adjournment

Chair Donna Linder adjourned the meeting at 3:38 p.m.