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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** NEW MEMBERS, FORMAL LAAC  
**FROM:** MEMBERS, INFORMAL LAAC  
**SUBJECT:** TRANSITION OF THE LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
**DATE:** JANUARY 29, 2016  
**CC:** OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

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This memo provides recommended areas of work for the members of the newly established Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC), as well as the history and background of this body.

### **Recommended Areas of Work for the Newly Established LAAC**

Over the past few years, the work of the informal LAAC achieved significant gains that helped to strengthen the participation of limited English-proficient voters in California's democracy. While much was achieved, there is still more work to be done. Below is a list of activities identified for the consideration of the new LAAC members:

- Improve the consistency and quality of translation in election materials by coordinating with the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) on their language glossary project.
- Provide recommendations on the new policies and practices for election procedures, such as:
  - Implementation of California's new motor voter law
  - Implementation of conditional voter registration
- Research languages used by California voters to better understand who voters are and where they are located.
  - Evaluate the languages emerging in California and prepare for new language determinations at the end of 2016.
  - Identify counties providing assistance in new languages for the first time and if they need support.
  - Explore the type of Chinese being used by Chinese Americans in California to determine if translations should be rendered in traditional or simplified Chinese.
- Identify best practices for language assistance and support the development of a clearinghouse of resources.
- Determine ways to increase election protection for limited English-proficient voters.
- Improve poll monitoring of language assistance.

## History of the LAAC

The purpose for forming the Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) was to establish a formal body to work in partnership with the Office of the Secretary of State (SoS) in order to meet the language needs of California's diverse communities. By creating the LAAC, the SoS would help to ensure limited English-proficient voters had every opportunity to engage in California's democracy as required by state and federal laws. The vision was for LAAC members to serve beyond the role of reviewing translations. The LAAC would provide early input regarding the development of election policies and practices that would impact all voters.

The Future of California Elections (FoCE), a nonprofit nonpartisan network of organizations engaged in elections, initiated discussions with the SoS in 2013 to establish a formal LAAC. A formal committee was not possible at that time; thus, an informal relationship was established with executive SoS staff. The LAAC participants, who included members of FoCE, as well other language access stakeholders, met with SoS executive staff bi-monthly from December 2013 to November 2014. In 2015, with the support of newly elected California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, the informal LAAC renewed efforts to establish a formal advisory body. The informal LAAC met throughout 2015 to discuss progress towards their goals and met consistently with Secretary Padilla's staff. This effective collaboration led to serious discussions about formalizing the LAAC through legislation. The LAAC worked with the SoS office and Assemblymember Ed Chau to draft a bill formalizing the LAAC. In September 2015 the Governor signed AB1443, which established the LAAC in the California Elections Code.

## SECTION 1.

*Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 2600) is added to Division 2 of the Elections Code, to read:*

### *CHAPTER 8. Language Accessibility 2600.*

*The Secretary of State shall establish a Language Accessibility Advisory Committee which shall meet no less than four times each calendar year. The committee shall consist of no less than fifteen members and be comprised of the Secretary of State and his or her designee or designees and additional members appointed by the Secretary of State. The appointees shall have demonstrated language accessibility experience, have knowledge of presenting election materials to voters using plain language methods or another method that is easy for voters to access and understand, or be a county elections official or his or her designee. At least three county elections officials shall be appointed to the committee. The Secretary of State shall consult with and consider the recommendations of the committee. The committee shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Secretary of State.*

## **Milestones Achieved by the LAAC**

The informal LAAC achieved several milestones that helped set the stage for the formalization of the LAAC. Below is a list of past accomplishments:

- Established a productive working relationship with SoS staff.
- Provided expertise and feedback to create what is now the national standard for a fully translated and accessible online voter registration website, known as the California Online Voter Registration (COVR) website.
  - Served as beta testers and provided feedback about the quality and accessibility of translations to be posted on the website.
  - Coordinated the community review process of the translated COVR pages with grassroots community organizations.
  - Promoted COVR 2.0 among limited English proficient voters.
  - Recommended talking points for the SoS to increase awareness of available translation of COVR.
- Recommended improvements to SoS' guidance to county registrars of voters on language assistance requirements.
- Recommended improvements to SoS' election observation checklist.

## **Current and Past Members of the Informal LAAC 2013-2015**

Members of Future of California Elections are highlighted with an (\*).

- Melissa Breach, League of Women Voters of California\*
- Isabel Cortes, Office of Senator Loni
- Noemi Gallardo, Voz Interpreting
- Astrid Garcia Ochoa, Future of California Elections (FoCE), LAAC Co-Chair\*
- Rosalind Gold, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund\*
- Ben Hamatake, Orange County Registrar of Voters
- Neal Kelley, Orange County Registrar of Voters\*
- Yongho Kim, Korean Resource Center
- Deanna Kitamura, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles, LAAC Co-Chair\*
- Raul Macias, ACLU of California\*
- Yessenia Martinez, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund\*
- Ofelia Medina, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund\*
- Steven Ochoa, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund\*
- Bo Sivanunsakul, Thai Community Development Center
- Lori Shellenberger, ACLU of California\*