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September 22, 2020

County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum #20218

**TO:** All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters

**FROM:** /s/ Susan Lapsley  
Deputy Secretary of State, HAVA Director and Counsel

**RE:** Elections: Remote Access Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM)

This CC/ROV details various topics around Remote Access Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM).

California Elections Code requires all county elections officials to permit a voter with a disability, or a military or overseas voter, to cast his or her ballot using a certified RAVBM system. Assembly Bill 860 (Stats. 2020, Ch. 4, Sec. 3) added Elections Code section 3016.7 that requires county elections officials for the statewide general election on November 3, 2020, to permit any voter to cast a ballot using a certified RAVBM system, regardless of whether the voter is a voter with disabilities or a military or overseas voter.

### **Requesting an RAVBM**

A voter can contact a county elections official directly to request access to an RAVBM system. Additionally, for voters requesting the delivery of an Emergency Ballot pursuant to Elections Code section 3021, RAVBM access can also be provided as a form of delivery of the ballot by the elections official. Accordingly, all RAVBM systems must have the following modified attestation language:

For the November 3, 2020, General Election, all registered voters in California are eligible to use this accessible vote-by-mail system.

- I am a California registered voter, therefore I am eligible to use this accessible vote-by-mail system.
- I understand that my ballot selections marked by this system must be printed by me and submitted to my county elections official, [insert local election jurisdiction name].
- I understand that I must submit my printed and signed selections no later than 8:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on November 3, 2020 - Election Day - by either:

- Mailing it via U.S. Postal Service with a postmark on or before November 3, 2020; or
- Hand delivering it to the office of my county elections official; or
- Dropping it off at any polling place, vote center, vote-by-mail drop-off location, or drop box in the state.
- **For military and overseas voters (UOCAVA) only**, returning by fax.

I understand that my ballot selections marked by this system and submitted to [insert local election jurisdiction name] will be transferred onto a ballot by an election official in order to be tabulated.

- I certify that all of the above are true.

The previous rules still apply that only UOCAVA voters can return ballots by fax. All others must be mailed via U.S. Postal Service, hand delivered to the county elections official, dropped at a voting location or drop box, subject to the existing return deadlines.

Additionally, voters can return an RAVBM paper cast record using their own envelope, as long as the envelope is signed by the voter.

### **Enabling RAVBM Request on My Voter Status**

VoteCal recently implemented a change to the Secretary of State's My Voter Status website to allow a voter to request the use of an RAVBM system for an upcoming election through the My Voter Status website. Beginning on September 23, 2020 (E-41), a voter will be able to request an RAVBM for the November 3, 2020, General Election, when they review their information on My Voter Status.

The option to request an RAVBM for the November General Election will be removed from My Voter Status at the close of polls on Election Day.

When a voter requests an RAVBM on My Voter Status, VoteCal will send the county EMS a notice that the voter has submitted a request for an RAVBM for a specific election. VoteCal will not store this request in the voter's record. Voters who are requesting an RAVBM are also required to provide an email address if they don't currently have one on file and are asked to provide a phone number, however, the phone number is not required.

Counties are expected to receive the RAVBM request and issue an RAVBM to the voter in the manner consistent with how RAVBMs are currently issued in the county.

### **Indicating RAVBM Issued in EMS and VoteCal**

When a county issues an RAVBM, the county must indicate the voter was issued an RAVBM by providing VoteCal with a vote-by-mail ballot record and include the flag “isRAVBM” set to True.

### **RAVBM System Information on Your Website**

Counties are encouraged to prominently display RAVBM information on their county website.

The SOS has created a web page with further guidance for the public regarding RAVBM systems: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/remote-accessible-vote-mail>. In addition, the Disability Rights of California has created a one-page informational handout, attached, that may be helpful for voters interested in using an RAVBM.

### **Ballot Tracking and RAVBM**

If a voter has signed up for ballot tracking through the Secretary of State’s Where’sMyBallot tracking service, and requests an RAVBM, the voter will receive the same messaging as for vote-by-mail ballots.

### **Reporting RAVBM Usage**

Certification of RAVBMs requires California jurisdictions that use an RAVBM system to provide a report to the Secretary of State, within 30 calendar days of certifying the election results, listing the number of voters that used the system and all technical issues reported (if any) along with any mitigations.

If you have questions on any of the above information, please contact Susan Lapsley at [slapsley@sos.ca.gov](mailto:slapsley@sos.ca.gov).

Thank you.

Attachment

# Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail

## **What is Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM)?**

Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM) systems will allow voters with disabilities, many of whom often rely on others to assist them in reading and marking their ballot to cast their vote privately and independently from home. This IS NOT internet voting.

## **How many RAVBM systems are there in California?**

Currently, the California Secretary of State has conditionally approved three systems, Democracy Live Secure Select 1.2.2, Five Cedars Group Alternate Format Ballot (AFB) v5.2.1 and Dominion ImageCast Remote 5.2.

## **How do RAVBM systems work?**

Generally, a RAVBM system gives a voter with a disability an opportunity to download a ballot, allowing them to read it and mark it using their own assistive technology device. At that point, the voter with a disability has to print out their selections and return them to the County Elections Office. Disability Rights California published a [video demonstration of a RAVBM system](#).

## **How would a voter with a disability return their selections to the County Elections Office?**

Either mail it or drop it off at a polling place (or vote center) in the specially provided envelope you will receive from your County Elections Office and sign the envelope, which has specially punched holes to indicate where a person with a sight disability should sign.

## **What are the requirements for receiving a RAVBM ballot?**

In some counties, a voter with a disability who would like to use the RAVBM system must have registered as a Vote-by-Mail voter. A voter may request a Vote-by-Mail Ballot or a RAVBM up to seven days prior to Election Day.<sup>1</sup> Voters in Voter's Choice Act counties, other than Los Angeles, do not have to request a Vote-by-Mail ballot this as they will

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<sup>1</sup> Some counties allow voters with disabilities to use RAVBM by going directly to the portal from the County Elections Office's website without a formal request. Individual counties can modify their website as needed.

automatically be receiving a ballot with the return envelope. They must however, request RAVBM.

### **How secure are RAVBM systems?**

California has one of the most strenuous testing and certification programs in the country to ensure that your private and independent ballot is secure.

## **OUTREACH IDEAS FOR RAVBM:**

There are many ways counties may successfully publicize this new accessible voting system.

Have information about the RAVBM system, including information about how a voter with a disability can request to use it, and a video demonstration of the RAVBM system on the Elections Office Website.

Through the County's Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC), including a demonstration of the RAVBM system at a VAAC meeting.

Publish in the Sample Ballot/Voter Information Guide.

Send information to all stakeholders and community-based organizations, for example: Department of Rehabilitation or all Independent Living Centers, California Council of the Blind or the National Foundation of the Blind to name just a couple.

Encourage the stakeholders and community-based organizations to post the information, including the video demonstration, on their website.

Provide demonstrations of how to use the RAVBM system at outreaches at disability-related organizations.

**Individuals with Disabilities may also Contact Disability Rights California Voting Hotline for further information:  
888-569-7955**