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Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC)

Wednesday, June 11, 2025, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome, Call to Order, Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum

LAAC members present:

- Pedro Hernandez
- Paul Burke
- Barbara Hurtado
- Deanna Kitamura
- Karduz Nguyen
- Dean Logan
- Monica Villicana
- Abril Villanueva
- Jaqueline Coto

Members of SOS:

- Jana Lean – Chief of Elections
- Kirsten Larsen – Elections Administration Manager
- Justin Hirai – Election Security Unit Manager
- Rodney Rodriguez – Office of Voting Systems (OVSTA)
- Adam Quintana – Voters Choice Act (VCA)
- Lauro Feliciano – Legislation

Quorum was met.

2. LAAC Member Updates

- Deanna Kitamura:
 - **Bill SB 266 Update:** Bill did not advance out of the Senate Appropriations Committee
- Dean Logan:
 - **LA County Analysis**
 - Conducted a comprehensive data analysis and summary of the Voter Outreach & Education Campaign
 - The campaign included multilingual materials and targeted language outreach across the county
 - Digital media efforts were found to be effective, and contributed to:

- An estimated 1% overall (all populations) increase in voter turnout
- 5% increase in turnout among low-propensity voters
- Approximately 78,000 additional voters are attributed to the digital media campaign.
- **SB 266 update:**
 - Currently exploring possible proposal options to modify the trigger point for language designation in Voter's Choice Act (VCA) counties. The goal is to enhance accessibility by allowing voters to cast their ballot at any vote center location.

3. Voting Rights Act Section 203 Commemoration Events

- August 6, 2025- Commemorative Webinar
 - Featuring individuals who were directly involved in the original 1975 legislation and its subsequent reauthorizations
- August 26, 2025- Summit
 - Location: Sacramento
 - Event featuring panels that focus on the future of language access

4. Secretary of State Updates

- Outreach and Education Update:
 - **California Archives:**
 - A new exhibit will launch in August and remain available for one year
 - Location: 4th floor of the Secretary of State
 - **1965 Voting rights act event**
 - An in-person event is in development, with plans to convert content into a podcast
 - Goal: to provide accessible information in multiple formats for broader community reach
- Voting Systems Testing
 - **10x Software Solutions: E-poll book currently undergoing testing**
 - **Electronic poll books: in the testing phase**
 - **Upcoming voting systems:**
 - LA VSAP system
 - Hart Verity Voting System
 - ES&S voting system
- Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
 - **County administration plans:**

- Meetings are underway with the 12 participating counties regarding their Election Administration plans
 - Three counties have submitted draft plans to SOS for review:
 - Amador county anticipates completing their election administration plan by end of July
 - Calaveras county
 - Mariposa
- **Voter's choice Act task force:**
 - Members have been appointed and are listed on the SOS website
 - The first public meeting was held on June 12
 - Advocacy engagement:
 - The VCA team met with advocates on June 5 to discuss voter center usage in statewide elections
 - Advocate feedback:
 - Concern about current political climate
 - Emphasis on preserving voter access under the VCA without legislative changes currently
 - County Concerns:
 - Several VCA counties raised concerns about the cost and resource strain of opening centers for the full 10-day period
 - Suggested exploring a reduced voting period (e.g., opening vote centers 4 days prior to election day)
- **Reporting suggestions:**
 - Jackie recommended including demographic on the voters to see who is and is not voting in future reports to improve analysis
- Legislative Updates
 - SB 266- This bill did not pass out of the house of origin by June 6th legislative deadline
 - AB 72- this bill proposes Bengali being included as a translated language in elections, was held in the Assembly in March.

5. **Overview of Asian Law Caucus and California Common Cause November 2024 Election Report highlighting accessibility and language access trends and key recommendations**

- Methodology
 - Asian Law Caucus and California Common Cause have led nonpartisan election monitoring programs since 1990s
 - For the November 2024 General election, over 520 trained observers monitored more than 1,400 polling sites across 34 counties, covering approximately 93% of California's electorate. Special attention was

given to counties using the Voters Choice Act (VCA) model, especially those with high immigrant and limited English proficiency populations.

- Observers assessed:
 - Physical and language accessibility
 - Poll worker conduct
 - Issues potentially affecting voter participation
- Key findings
 - **Language Access**
 - Strong compliance with **Section 203**: Multilingual ballots were available at all visited locations.
 - **Section 14201 compliance** varied: in some counties facsimile ballots clearly displayed, while others only provided them upon voter request.
 - **Bilingual poll worker coverage** was inconsistent. Spanish and Chinese were generally well-represented, but less common languages (covered under 12303) were underserved.
 - In some counties with large Spanish or Chinese-speaking populations, there was a notable lack of bilingual poll workers.
 - **Disability access**
 - Inconsistencies were observed in accessible parking. Visible signage, and ADA-compliant equipment
 - Accessibility requires continuous attention, not just regulatory compliance.
 - Additional concerns included:
 - Long lines
 - Electioneering and voter intimidation
 - Poor directional signage
 - Voter ID confusion at site entrances
- VCA vs. Non-VCA Counties
 - **VCA Counties** outperformed staffing and accessibility:
 - 84% had at least one bilingual poll workers present
 - **Non-VCA counties** were more likely to provide assistive tools for voters with disabilities
- Policy recommendations
 - Increase staffing and check-in stations at polling places
 - Encourage early voting in VCA counties and consider expanding early voting hours
 - Avoid polling sites that require ID for entry
 - Emphasize clear “Voter Here” and directional signage
 - Ensure facsimile ballots are visible and available without request
 - Post signs about the state's language assistance hotlines
 - Improve recruitment of bilingual poll workers, particularly for underrepresented languages

- Supported counties in sourcing qualified translators and encouraging native speaker reviews
- Reinforce the requirement to provide auxiliary aids
- Enhance poll worker training on accessible ballot marking devices and support tools.

6. Working Groups

- Poll Worker Research
 - No updates.
- Translation Timeline, Feedback, and Recommendations
 - Pedro and Cathy clarified recommendations that were made to LA county.
- Language Accessibility Best Practices and Recommendation
 - No updates
- State and Federal Requirements
 - No updates

7. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

- August Agenda (request): Provide education on 14201 requirement and the associated process, as the termination is expected to occur within the next year.
- Pocket talk (translation support): Discussion on the use of Pocket Talk to support translation needs. Use this as an opportunity to assess its effectiveness and explore where and how this type of translation tool should be utilized.

8. Adjournment