



Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.

California Secretary of State Elections Division

1500 11th Street, 5th Floor | Sacramento, CA 95814 | 916.657.2166 | elections@sos.ca.gov

Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC)

Wednesday, July 10, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

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

VAAC members present:

- Janet Bernabe
- Paul Burke
- Jacqueline Coto
- Giselle Gazca
- Pedro Hernandez
- Barbara Hurtado
- Deanna Kitamura
- Alexander Neofitidis
- Karduz Nguyen
- Svetlana Osokina
- Voleck Taking
- Abril Villanueva
- Monica Villicana

Members of SOS:

- Jana Lean – Chief of Elections
- Justin Hirai – Election Security Unit Manager
- Debra Ledsinger – IT Specialist - Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)
- Adam Quintana – Policy and Planning Manager - Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

Quorum was met.

2. LAAC Member Updates

- Pedro Hernandez
 - California Common cause is going to be preparing to engage in the election protection program with Asian Law Caucus. He has also been in contact with a county about a potential LAAC in that county. Pedro is hoping to engage with another county on improving the quality of language services there to expand facsimile ballots.
 - Pedro also shared that Val Jacobo will be resigning from her position with the LAAC due to a restructure at her job and her no longer being able to attend these meetings moving forward.

- Ryan Reece mentioned that during our next LAAC meeting in September that if the committee would like to vote for a new co-chair to replace Val, we will put an item on the agenda to do so.
- Abril Villaneuva
 - No updates.
- Alexander Neofitidis
 - No updates.
- Barbara Hurtado
 - Barbara has reached out to other organizations, but she hasn't received anything back from them yet. She's also reached out to her county to see what other programs provide more languages for her community.
- Deanna Kitamura
 - Deanna's organization has updated the Voter Rights Facts sheet. They are in the process of translating them into various languages and will post them on their website soon. They are starting to reach out to their community partners now to set up workshops with those community groups for August and September. They are finishing the report from their March Poll Monitoring with Common Cause and should be out sometime next month.
- Giselle Gazca
 - No updates.
- Jacqueline Coto
 - Jacqueline has been working hard with coordinating with the bilingual poll worker working group. The working group met last week, and they went over some of the questions on the survey and proposed some edits and suggestions.
- Janet Bernabe
 - No updates.
- Karduz Nguyen
 - No updates.
- Monica Villicana
 - Monica reached out to the election division coordinator for Santa Clara County to schedule a time to meet. She would like to discuss if they have any information for her about their Language Access for the division.
- Paul Burke
 - Paul attended the Ventura County LAAC meeting, and they were helpful with providing their internal schedule for translation for county materials.
- Svetlana Osokina
 - No updates.

- Voleck Taking
 - No updates.

3. March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election Feedback

- Pedro Hernandez
 - Pedro and his team did some election protection monitoring and had volunteers go through a checklist at voting sites. They found that there is an opportunity for improvement on having better signage for language materials that are available at voting sites.
 - Voters who prefer to speak a language other than English might have trouble navigating the information at the voting site and identifying what services are actually available.
- Alexander Neofitidis
 - Alexander has noticed that there is an underrepresentation in ASL and Mexican Sign Language throughout most of the electoral process or voting process.
 - Jacqueline suggested that this feedback could be helpful for the VAAC as well since they mostly handle matters of that nature.
 - Monica mentioned that Santa Clara County uses iPads at their voting sites for ASL voters. She said that she would reach out to them and see if there is any information that they could provide to her regarding how they use them.

4. Working Groups

- Poll Worker Research
 - Jacqueline has been working hard with coordinating with the bilingual poll worker working group. The working group met last week, and they went over some of the questions on the survey and proposed some edits and suggestions.
 - Ryan Reece informed the committee that the Secretary of State will work on adding a couple of questions to each language that relates to how many bilingual poll workers counties have staffed at each early voting and polling place location.
 - During the working group meeting, Armando was able to provide some county perspective while making edits and suggestions to the current survey. Jacqueline would like for the committee to provide feedback on this document once it's finished and then present it to the Secretary of State as a recommendation.

- Translation Timeline, Feedback, and Recommendations
 - Pedro and the rest of the working group meet prior to the LAAC meeting, and they were able to discuss about the challenges in making translations fair for everyone. They also spoke about the translation timeline.
 - The working group is looking at ways that they might suggest improving the process but realize that they don't have any feedback just yet.
 - Jana Lean suggested that Justin Hirai go through the translation timeline and explain each step in the process.
 - Jana also mentioned that the ballot label and title summaries, that members who volunteered were sent a copy of to review, are not to share this out to anyone. These will be on public display on E-105.
 - Pedro asked if on E-105 when it's posted for public viewing that it would be recommended that the members share with their networks and Jana said yes to please do so.

- Language Accessibility Best Practices and Recommendations
 - Pedro and the rest of the working group meet prior to the LAAC meeting and discussed a few ideas. One of them being having the Secretary of State work with this LAAC working group on the communication it sends out.
 - He suggested that this working group would work towards creating a social media toolkit in different languages that counties can use to raise awareness on components of the ballot.
 - Abril mentioned that having a social media toolkit will go a long way as there is misinformation online and having a post on social media websites and it directing the voter to the correct page will help.
 - Jana informed the committee that the SOS does not have a social media toolkit that specifically addresses translated issues on the ballot and that the working group should look at the preexisting posts that the SOS does and maybe provide recommendations about those.

- Geography and Language Services
 - Dean Logan was not present at today's meeting, so we will be tabling this agenda item to the next LAAC meeting.

5. Secretary of State Updates

Voting Systems Testing

- Debra Ledsinger from OVSTA offered an update on recent voting system testing:

- Dominion Democracy Suite 5.19 Voting System is currently being tested.

Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- Adam Quintana provided updates on the 29 counties that are currently under the VCA model.
 - 11 counties will be updating their Election Administration Plans in 2025 prior to the 2026 election cycle.
 - The VCA team at the SOS is still hosting its monthly meetings with all VCA counties.
 - They also have just concluded the series of meetings that they have been having with advocates of Voter's Choice Act counties.
 - They were looking at the VCA implementation in those counties and trying to identify things that are working and things that are not working with the VCA model.

Legislative Updates

- Mary Mooney was not present at today's meeting.

6. State and County Language Requirements

- Nineteen 14201 languages are not currently covered by section 203 that the state does not provide for counties.
- Not an action item, but counties would like additional support from the state for languages not provided by SOS.

7. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

- Pedro requested that we put voting on a new co-chair to replace Val as an agenda item for the next meeting in September.

8. Adjournment