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California Secretary of State

Elections Division

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Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC)

Wednesday, July 22, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order

2. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

LAAC members present:

- Anabel Alonzo
- Greta Arevalo
- Armando Salud-Ambriz
- Cindy Wu
- Deanna Kitamura
- Fangchun Tsai
- Gloria Liz Oviedo
- Janet Bernabe
- Paul Burke
- Pedro Hernandez
- Rahmo Abdi

Members of SOS:

- Kirsten Larsen – Election Administration Manager
- Jeff Nelson – Election Security Unit Manager
- Ryan Reece – Elections Analyst
- William Goltra – Voter Access Translations Coordinator
- Jason Ando – Information Technology Specialist, Office of Voting Systems Testing
- Joshua Robinson –Voter's Choice Act Unit Manager
- Paige Kent – Attorney, Legislation

Quorum was met.

3. Public Comment

- This time is set aside for public presentations regarding related matters not appearing on the agenda. Members of the public making presentations are limited to two (2) minutes per speaker.

No public comments were submitted.

4. **Adoption of previous meeting minutes (May 18, 2026)**

Motion to adopt minutes put forth by Armando Salud-Ambriz; seconded by Cindy Wu.

Vote:

Yea: Greta Arevalo, Armando Salud-Ambriz, Cindy Wu, Fangchun Tsai, Gloria Liz Oviedo, Janet Bernabe, Paul Burke, Pedro Hernandez

Abstain: Deanna Kitamura, Rahmo Abdi

Motion carried.

5. **LAAC Member Updates**

- **Deanna Kitamura**

- Asian Law Caucus and California Common Cause are meeting with stakeholders to discuss SB 1360. The bill has passed the Assembly Elections Committee and now it is in the Appropriations Committee. Deanna clarified that the reference to *AB* 1360 in the previous meeting minutes should be a reference to *SB* 1360. Deanna hopes to provide a more thorough update regarding SB 1360 during the next LAAC meeting.

- **Cindy Wu**

- Cindy stated that during the June primary election, she visited an election center in Rosemead next to the city's city hall. She stated that when you walk into the center, staff ask you for your name, birth date, address, and other private information and staff, in turn, frequently restate the information. She stated that everyone could hear you when you state this information. She stated that she would prefer to see more privacy. In addition to this observation, Cindy stated that immigrant populations in the West San Gabriel Valley (e.g., cities such as El Monte and South El Monte) tend to not vote-by-mail. The lines to vote in-person are two or more hours long. Cindy inquired whether more outreach at the state-level could be done to remind individuals that they can vote at any voting location. She also stated that there is a website people can use to determine how long the lines are and that more outreach should be done to promote this website to reduce the likelihood of waiting in long lines to vote.

- **Paul Burke**

- Paul stated that the League of Women Voters supports AB 1360 but clarified that he does not speak on behalf of the League. He also stated that he visited four voting locations and observed that voters were directed to provide their name and other personal information on a piece of paper, rather than say the information out loud.

- **Pedro Hernandez**

- Pedro stated that he helped the volunteers in the Election Protection Program of California Common Cause. He stated that he recently received a study from Demos showing that voters turn out at higher rates in precincts that provide ballots and facsimile ballots in the voters' preferred language(s). Pedro stated that he would like Demos to present the study to the LAAC in the future. He reiterated Common Cause's support of AB 1360.

- **Cindy Wu**

- Cindy stated that she also had the opportunity to proofread the Chinese translations of the ballot labels, titles, and summaries. She stated that she has suggestions on how to facilitate the review process. She stated it may be more helpful to use updated technology to facilitate the process, such as Google Docs.
- Pedro reminded the committee that the Secretary of State has made efforts to simplify the review process, such as consolidating the review into one document. Pedro was excited about this development.

6. Secretary of State Updates

Voting Systems Testing (OVSTA)

- **Jason Ando**

- Hart Verity 3.2.2 is currently in post-testing.
- Elections Systems and Software (ES&S) has the EVS 6.5.2.0 voting system in pre-testing.
- Democracy Live has its Secure Select 1.2.6 in pre-testing.
- Smartmatic has given the Secretary of State its application for its VSR1 2.1 system.

Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- **Joshua Robinson**

- The VCA Taskforce is concluding the 2025 Special Report and has submitted to the Legislature the Race and Ethnicity Report. He stated that the Taskforce will then work on a report on voter experience that is expected within the next few weeks to a month. The next task force meeting is text Thursday from 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Legislation

- **Paige Kent**

- As of July 2, SB 1360 was re-referred to the Appropriations Committee of the Assembly. This bill is part of the California Voting Rights Act package. Its sister bill is SB 1164. SB 1360 increases the circumstances under which election offices would be required to provide translated material and assistance. It is attempting to codify section 203 language determination protections of the federal Voting Rights Act. In some instances, it expands the current group of languages that would be required under state law.
- As of July 1, SB 1164 was re-referred to the Appropriations Committee of the Assembly. This bill attempts to repeal and replace the existing California Voting Rights Act. The Bill intends to broaden the existing Act and enshrine provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 into California state law. Its goals include prohibiting vote dilution, voter suppression, and other forms of voter discrimination. The Bill has been amended a few times. The most recent amendment occurred on July 2, 2026.

7. Asian Law Caucus and California Common Cause Presentations

- Asian Law Caucus and California Common Cause presented an overview of their election protection observations from the June 2026, Primary Election.
- **Brittany Stonesifer (Common Cause):** Asian Law Caucus and California Common Cause have been partners for a long time to run one of the largest, non-partisan election protection programs in California. Each state-wide election, the two entities coordinate to cover a majority of the counties (in terms of population). During the June 2026, Primary Election, they covered 20 counties and had over 260 poll monitors deployed to over 700 locations across the state. Monitors collected information on language access, disability access, voter intimidation, and general voting conditions (e.g., whether conditional voter registration is available). Monitors fill out a standardized form to record their observations. In the past, their observations helped pass legislation, such as curb side voting at every voting location in California. They also formed an election protection coalition in which members use a slack channel to communicate before and during election day which helps cover gaps in areas where they do not have physical staffers.
- **Sietse Goffard:** They found excellent compliance with federal Section 203 requirements. 100% of translated votable ballots were available in Section 203 languages. 99% of provisional ballots and same-day registration forms were available in Section 203 languages. To collect this data, they ask monitors to fill out a questionnaire that asks questions related to translated election materials such as voter information guides and signage.
- They also asked monitors to look at facsimile ballots to assess whether they comply with Section 14201 of California Election Code and are displayed prominently. They found that 99% of facsimile ballots were clearly displayed and easily accessible (e.g., posted on a wall or displayed on a language table). This observation is an improvement from 2024 when only 92% of facsimile ballots were clearly displayed and easily accessible. Monitors also verified that all new

languages added pursuant to Section 14201 were provided in facsimile ballots as well. They also found that most counties go beyond their legal requirements and provide facsimile ballots in all languages at all precincts.

- Monitors also assessed whether polling sites had multilingual poll workers. 88% of polling sites had at least one multilingual poll workers. 84% were wearing badges or other accessories that indicated their language skills. 99% of polling sites had signage about in-person language assistance being available. However, only around 50-60% of polling sites had signage telling voters that they could leverage the Secretary of States phone and video interpretation hotline, including ASL. This is an area for improvement.
- **Brittany Stonesifer (Common Cause):** One of their recommendations is for the state hotline: provide all counties with access to the state's language interpretation hotline and supply the counties with relevant signage for them to post at voting locations. This work should include a video option for ASL interpretation. Another recommendation: Ensure that multilingual resources are just as accessible for voters who vote by mail. This work should include making it easier for voters to request and receive these materials at home.
- The monitors observed other issues. There are a few counties (Riverside, San Diego, Stanislaus, and San Mateo) that require voters to fill out check-in forms and sign under penalty of perjury before they can vote in person—even if the voter is already registered. They had one documented experience where someone with a reading disability was unable to complete the check-in form and, in turn, left the location without voting. In addition, these forms are frequently only in English and, sometimes, in Spanish. People have told them that some counties have had these requirements for several years.
- In addition, observers noted a need for better directional signage in large complexes. This issue is especially true for the location for curb-side voting. Moreover, some polling sites felt uncomfortably tight which jeopardizes privacy and wheelchair accessibility.
- **Pedro Hernandez:** Pedro thanked the presenters for this information. He was especially pleased with Section 203 compliances. He also felt this information was important because it helps us to identify accessibility gaps.
- **Paul Burke:** Paul stated that Ventura County has a sign-in form, rather than ask people to provide relevant information out loud. He stated that this could be a solution to privacy issues. He said he would do additional work to determine whether these forms are discarded after sign-in.
- **Sietse Goffard:** Asian Law Caucus conducts poll monitoring trainings. Interested citizens can apply to be a poll monitor online. These trainings are only conducted in English. However, a staff member might be able to provide live translation during the training. The interested citizen should include a translation request on their online application.
- **Brittany Stonesifer (Common Cause):** There is a legal concern about counties creating sign-in forms. Sign-in forms will eventually lead to disenfranchisement for some voters, as demonstrated in her prior example regarding the voter with a reading disability.

- **Pedro Hernandez:** He wondered if there is a uniform standard for check-in forms. He would welcome from the Secretary of State was the standard practice is and how it has been rolled out by counties. Deanna Kitamura stated that the Secretary of State never released a CCROV concerning this information. She raised a concern about a county comparing signatures before they would let a voter vote.

8. Working Groups Updates

- Translation Quality and Language Access Standards
 - **Gloria Oviedo:** She and Fangchun presented the working group's recommendation. The recommendations are as follows:
 - *Do Not Rely Solely on Vendor Translators:* State should continue to work with the County language specialists in reviewing all translated materials and provide feedback before releasing final versions. This ensures accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and consistency across counties rather than depending only on vendor-produced translations
 - *Standardize Election Terminology:* Establish and maintain standardized terminology for election-related languages, including jurisdiction names and election-specific terms. Consistency in terminology helps ensure clarity across counties, improves translation quality, and reduces confusion for voters and election workers.
 - Gloria stated that the primary reason for continuing county language specialist review is to avoid errors in the final translated version, which can otherwise lead to significant operational delays. She stated that relying solely on vendor translators increases the risk of translation inaccuracies, terminology inconsistencies, or context specific misunderstandings. She said that county language specialists provide essential expertise and community-based knowledge that ensure translations are correct before materials move into ballot layout and production workflows.
 - She added that the Secretary of State should continue to seek the support of counties. The Secretary of State should establish state-wide translation terminology and provide it on the Secretary of State's website or email it to the counties. The documents entailed in this recommendation would be the ballot labels, titles, and summaries, as well as the state candidate lists.
 - **Fangchun Tsai:** The entirety of the recommendation should be implemented in time for the November 2026 General Election. Fangchun and Gloria clarified that the glossary will be a standardized glossary across the state and translators.
 - **Paul Burke:** What happens when two counties provide a conflicting translation? Kirsten Larsen of the Secretary of State's office clarified that in the event of a conflict, the Secretary of State uses the certified translator with whom the office contracted to translate the election materials.

- **Armando Salud-Ambriz:** He agreed on the importance of establishing a uniform glossary but expressed concerns about the quick turnaround timeline for the overall recommendation. Pedro Hernandez and Anabel Alonzo echoed this concern.
- **Gloria Oviedo:** Gloria confirmed that the working group would rework the recommendation to reflect an updated timeline for the recommendation. The working group would also develop a template for the glossary. They will present these updates at the next LAAC meeting.
- Budgeting, Operations, and Compliance
 - The working group did not have an update.
- Community Engagement and Culturally Responsive Outreach
 - The working group did not have an update. The group will meet during the week of August 10. The group will have an update at the next LAAC meeting.
- Technology and Digital Outreach Tools
 - **Cindy Wu:** The working group provided the following recommendations, which focus on making election information more accessible and increase participation: (1) Establish an official California Secretary of State presence on LINE and WeChat to reach Mandarin-, Cantonese-, Taiwanese-, Japanese-, Thai-, and Indonesian-speaking communities who rely heavily on these platforms for daily information. (2) Improve statewide communication by collecting standardized data from counties on their communication practices, languages used, and tools through the LAAC Social Media & Communication Survey to share best practices. (3) Enhancing SOS social media platforms through multilingual messaging, increased educational video content, year-round voter engagement strategies, and Create an Evergreen Video Highlighting Language Accessibility Services. The Secretary of State's current social media presence is predominantly only in English.
 - Part of the impetus for this recommendation is that voters do not generally use government websites, emails, or text messages to access election messaging. Asian-language communities in California specifically rely on LINE and WeChat for official information. In addition, counties currently vary widely in communication practices. A statewide survey helps identify gaps, understand multilingual needs, and develop best practices for language-mandated communities. Lastly, SOS digital channels show opportunities for improvement—such as limited multilingual visibility, education on language accessibility services, and inconsistent posting. Enhanced multilingual content and educational videos would improve voter engagement, accessibility, and public trust.

- **Greta Arevalo:** She further clarified that this recommendation would apply to the California Secretary of State's current communication platforms by having the office develop translated election information messaging on Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, and its website. The statewide survey would be sent to counties using the draft LAAC survey. The recommendation would also have the Secretary of State develop accounts on LINE and WeChat.
- **Pedro Hernandez:** He stated that the recommendation would benefit from a greater description of WeChat and how the application would build trust. He also raised a concern about the quality of translations on WeChat.
- **Cindy Wu:** Cindy clarified that LINE and WeChat are functionally very similar to WhatsApp. She further clarified that LINE and WeChat work similar to Instagram and Facebook in that individuals will be aware of the information on these applications once they subscribe to the Secretary of State's LINE or WeChat accounts.
- **Pedro Hernandez:** He stated that the timeline for the recommendations (i.e., implementation prior to the November 2026, General Election) is likely to soon given the Secretary of States extant responsibilities. He stated that it would be worthwhile to present this recommendation during the next LAAC meeting with an amendment to the deadlines as well as the descriptions of LINE and WeChat.

Motion put forth by Armando Salud-Ambriz to ask the Secretary of State's communications team to research LINE and WeChat and report back to the LAAC committee about its findings; seconded by Cindy Wu.

- **Sietse Goffard** (as member of the public): He expressed his support for WeChat as he uses it every day and believes that it is a productive tool to conduct outreach to Asian- and Chinese-speaking communities. He stated that the translations built into the application are also strong. He stated that the cyber security laws surrounding the application and rules around WeChat and its presence on government devices should be investigated.
- **Cindy Wu and Greta Arevalo:** They agreed to share a draft LAAC Social Media and Communication Survey that would be sent to counties to gather baseline data on outreach in each county.
- **Armando Salud-Ambriz:** He stated that the LAAC may develop and approve the survey but clarified that there is the state-wide Voters with Specific Needs Committee through which the survey could be distributed to counties for implementation, rather than have the Secretary of State carry out the survey.

Vote:

Yea: Anabel Alonzo, Greta Arevalo, Armando Salud-Ambriz, Cindy Wu, Deanna Kitamura, Fangchun Tsai, Gloria Liz Oviedo, Janet Bernabe, Paul Burke, Pedro Hernandez, Rahmo Abdi
Motion carried.

9. Offsite LAAC Meeting Locations

- **Pedro Hernandez:** LA County has offered to host an offsite LAAC meeting location. Pedro stated that he would work with the Secretary of State to determine the requirements for an offsite LAAC meeting location. He asked the committee if anyone else would like to facilitate a physical LAAC meeting in their county.
- **Rahmo Abdi:** She said she would like to facilitate futures meetings in San Diego. She clarified that there is a facility that can hold 400 people.
- **Cindy Wu:** She stated that she may have access to a complementary facility in the city of Lemon Grove in San Diego County.
- **Pedro Hernandez:** He said he would work with the Secretary of State to obtain feedback on these offsite locations. He clarified that the LAAC meeting would remain partially remote even though there would be physical meeting locations.

A member of the public asked for the name of the website that tracks wait times for lines on election day. Cindy Wu stated that she believes that it is locator.lavote.gov.

10. Future Presentations

- **Pedro Hernandez:** He reiterated that he would like Demos to present to the LAAC its study on turnout and election materials in California. He also mentioned that there is an interest in meeting requirements under California Election Code Section 14201. He said that would be a longer-term item during which the Secretary of State would probably like to have its legal counsel present. He stated that if you have any ideas, please send it to the LAAC email address: laac@sos.ca.gov.

11. Future Agenda Items

No future agenda items were stated.

12. Adjournment

ACTION ITEMS

- SOS staff to post to the LAAC webpage the finalized meeting minutes from May 18, 2026, meeting.
- SOS staff to conduct research on LINE and WeChat and report back to the LAAC committee about its findings.
- SOS staff to update the LAAC webpages to accurately reflect LAAC-related meeting information.
- Translation Quality and language Access Standards working group to update recommendation with new timeline and present the update during the next LAAC meeting.
- Pedro Hernandez to coordinate with SOS on requirements for offsite meeting locations.