



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, October 22, 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
- Janet Bernabe
- Monica Villicana
- Abril Villanueva
- Karduz Nguyen
- Jaqueline Coto
- Juan Pablo Cervantes

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
 - i. Poll monitoring planned in six counties (Fresno, Placer, Sacramento, San Francisco, Shasta, Siskiyou).
 - ii. A statewide language access report may be produced after analysis.
- Pedro Hernandez
 - i. Election Protection program active in Riverside, San Bernardino, and limited LA County outreach.
 - ii. Language Access Summit (August) was successful; recordings and materials posted online.

- Janet Bernabe (Riverside County)
 - i. Local LAAC meeting scheduled.
 - ii. New funding received for voter education
 - iii. Community concerns have heightened due to recent ICE activity.
 - iv. LA Forward Institute hosting “We Are California” event in the San Fernando Valley to promote early voting and provide county voter resources.
- Monica Villicana (Santa Clara County)
 - i. County evaluating Propio language services app to support on-demand ASL interpretation on iPads.
 - ii. Working with their Information Security for internal approval.

3. Secretary of State Updates

- Voting Systems Testing

Multiple systems in testing or pre-testing:

- LA County VSAT 4.0
- LA County ISB / RAVBM 4.0
- Hart Verity 3.2.2 (pre-testing)
- ES&S EVS 6.5.2.0 (pre-testing)
- Democracy Live Secure Select 1.2.6 (application review)
- Sensiolite 9.4 Ballot-on-Demand (application review)
- Voter’s Choice Act (VCA)
 - Statewide special election preparations are underway.
 - Ambassador Program continuing outreach in 10+ languages.
 - AB 1450 reestablished the Voter’s Choice Task Force.
 - Next meeting: November 20th
 - First topic: review of the special election
 - Registration/participation opportunities and meeting info to be posted on SOS website.
- Legislative Updates
- Provided updates on SOS-sponsored bills signed into law, including:
 - AB 808 – Eliminates fax submissions for campaign filings.
 - AB 1249 – Establishes one day of early voting in non-VCA counties.

- AB 1392 – Makes voter registration data for elected officials & candidates confidential.
- AB 1411 – Requires non-VCA counties to submit voter education plans (must include language access components).
- SB 621 – Updates to military/overseas voter registration rules.
- SB 482 – Requires local governments to update Cal Roster within 128 days of a general election.
- Question:
 - Members requested a list of pending SOS-sponsored bills and asked for future agendas to include a list of bills being reported on. Lauro agreed to follow up.

4. Presentation on “California’s Voter Participation Gaps” by Dr. Mindy Romero from Center for Inclusive Democracy

- Turnout declined significantly compared to 2020:
- Registered voter turnout: –10 percentage points
- Eligible voter turnout: –4.8 percentage points
- Participation gaps widened among Latino, Black, and Asian American voters.
- Voters requesting materials in non-English languages had notably lower turnout; the gap widened in 2024.
- Root causes include registration disparities, uneven outreach by campaigns, and structural barriers.

5. Working Groups

- Poll Worker Research
 - No updates.
- Translation Timeline, Feedback, and Recommendations
 - Recommendations: Improving Translation Timelines for Ballot Materials
 - Revisited from prior meeting (quorum not previously met).
 - Key Recommendations (as amended during meeting):
 - Explore ways to deliver English Version 1 of ballot text earlier to counties (language changed from a specific day count to “earlier whenever feasible”).
 - Standardize glossaries and dialect guidance early with public and county input; publish widely.

- Improve usability and transparency of the Ballot Label Title & Summary (BLTS) review process, including better tools and more reviewer recruitment.
 - Motion to move the document forward: Pedro Hernandez
 - Second the motion: Deanna Kitamura
 - Vote: 10 Yes: Motion Passed
 - This recommendation will be formally transmitted to the Secretary of State.
- Language Accessibility Best Practices and Recommendation
 - Draft – Best Practices for Early and Inclusive Voter Outreach
 - Draft includes recommendations on early translation, community partnerships, multi-channel outreach, and translating core messages early.
 - Counties have not yet reviewed due to election workload.
 - Proposal: Subcommittee continue developing this into a 2026 work product.
- State and Federal Requirements
 - No updates.

6. 14201 Language Determination Timeline

- SOS must determine precincts where 3%+ of voting-age residents share a language minority group with limited English proficiency.
- Determinations rely on Census Data Review Board special tabulations.
- Timeline: Determinations will be released after the statewide special election.
- The SOS is working closely with the California Statewide Database.

Questions:

- Members requested updates on discretionary language-addition requests submitted by several advocacy groups.
- SOS: No update available at this time.
- Concerns raised about whether the federal shutdown delays Census tabulations.
- SOS: Data has not yet been received the timing remains uncertain.

7. 2026-2027 Language Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Applications

- The applications will hopefully be going out by the end of this month/early November for new 2-year term.
- Victoria will be sending the CCROV to the current State LAAC members once it is released.
- Submit the applications, and if you have any questions, please email laac@sos.ca.gov

8. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

9. Adjournment