



# Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.

## California Secretary of State Elections Division

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### Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC)

Wednesday, December 6, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

#### Meeting Minutes

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

LAAC members present:

- Pedro Hernandez
- Juan Pablo Cervantes
- Karduz Nguyen
- Paul Burke
- Val Jacobo
- Armando Salud
- Paul Burke
- Jacqueline Coto (joined late in the meeting)

Secretary of State Staff:

- Rodney Rodriguez – Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)
- Adam Quintana – Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
- Ted Mulhauser – Legislative Affairs

Quorum was not met.

### 2. LAAC Members Community Outreach Updates

Juan Pablo Cervantes

- In addition to prepping for the upcoming election, they have been working with their local LAAC to produce more accurate translations for their election materials.

Karduz Nguyen

- No updates.

Val Jacobo

- Currently working with two organizations, Project Respect Long Beach, and Pacifica Vote, both of which have been coordinating voter registration and outreach drives for various underrepresented communities in Los Angeles County and Orange County.

#### Armando Salud

- They are preparing for the election and are working on recruiting poll workers through a staffing agency, which they have never done before. The agency will be recruiting bilingual workers, and they hope they will have a full slate of bilingual poll workers for the election.
- They have recently had their Election Administration Plan (EAP) approved and are proceeding with their translation efforts.
- Val asked a question about whether the county does any outreach with Indigenous voters. Armando responded that the county does conduct such outreach, but currently does not have any programs that engage voters who speak an Indigenous language. He encouraged Val to send him any resources she has regarding voter outreach for Indigenous people.

#### Paul Burke

- No updates.
- Paul asked about Juan Pablo's success in recruiting community members into local LAACs. An action item has been set to have a future conversation about successful strategies for recruitment (Val also asked to have a related conversation regarding compensation for translators).

#### Pedro Hernandez

- They are preparing their efforts for the March elections, which includes working with Advancing Justice. They are looking to align their questionnaires for their post-election reviews to create more consistency.
- Pedro is also working on the Future of California Elections committee, which is planning a training with SOS staff on de-escalation regarding situations that could arise during the election cycle. This includes issues that relate to language access.
- Common Cause is also speaking to various ROVs about expanding language access for the coming election cycle.

### **3. Update on LAAC Member Recruitment for 2024-25 Term**

- Daneka updated the LAAC that there have been fifteen applicants so far. It is likely that the LAAC will be able to fill all the seats on the committee this year.
- SOS is preparing to contact applicants to see if they are prepared to join.
- Daneka is also working on next year's schedule.

- Daneka encouraged anyone still interested to apply.

#### 4. **Presentation and Discussion on Language Access Report: Breaking Barriers to the Ballot Box: Expanding Language Access for California Voters**

- Pedro presented the above listed document which was prepared by the California Language Access Work Group. They have been convening for two years to discuss language access issues in CA. All members of the LAAC should have received a copy of the report.
- This report includes the history of the expansion of language access and highlights a number of areas where further expansion and improvement of processes could take place.
- They conducted listening sessions in different languages and queried the participants to collect data on voter engagement and county communications. They included languages that are not covered under section 14201 or other mandates.
- They learned that there is a need for more information about voting issues from government entities. Voters who speak languages other than English want more translated information on the ballots.
- There was also a call from the surveyed voters about more transparency from the government about how decisions are made concerning language access.
- The report also reviewed how data collection (such as the Census) influences decisions about which language groups are served by election officials through translation services. The report offers opinions about the process of data collection used to highlight demographic realities.
- The report concluded that there are languages with large populations of speakers that are in need of more translated election materials, such as Arabic and African languages to use examples.
- The report also offered a number of insights regarding process related to language access initiatives and how voter outreach should be conducted to better serve the public.
- Pedro took questions about the report:
  - Val asked if any of the research conducted focused on smaller communities of specific language-speakers. Pedro responded that some of the data they used showed the existence of these communities. While the report does not focus on these specific language groups, it does focus on how service is provided to people in language groups of various demographic sizes.
  - Paul brought up the possibility of creating a report that focuses on the best processes for translation quality, including possible fixes by the CA Legislature for the improvement of such quality. Paul also shared his opinion that bilingual ballots would be ideal.

## 5. SOS Updates

### Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)

- Rodney Rodriguez from OVSTA offered an update on recent voting system testing:
  - Dominion Democracy Suite 5.19 Voting System is preparing for the testing phase.
  - Hart Verity Voting System are seeking an administrative approval to add ranked choice voting to the system.

### Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- Adam Quintana from SOS offered recent updates from the VCA team.
  - Eighteen of nineteen counties have submitted their EAPs, and they can be reviewed on the county websites as well as the SOS website.
  - The outstanding county, Santa Cruz, will be submitting their EAP soon.
  - SOS will be reinstating the VCA task force, which will make recommendations to the Secretary regarding elections that are administrated under the VCA. They are working on recruiting for this task force and Adam will provide future updates about the application process.

### Legislative Affairs

- Ted Mulhauser from SOS presented recent updates on legislative affairs.
  - The CA Legislature will be reconvening the first week in January.
  - The two-year bills could begin the process as soon as the Legislature convenes.
  - SOS is currently working to prepare legislative proposals for the next session.

### Other SOS Updates

- Daneka announced her plans to leave SOS next week and a new language access coordinator will be taking her place in time. Members of the LAAC expressed their appreciation for her service and work with the LAAC.
- Attention was also brought to the Local LAAC Toolkit which has been posted on the SOS website.

## **6. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items**

- There were no public comments.
- Paul would like to set an agenda item to review best practices for recruiting community members for the LAAC (as noted earlier in the Community Outreach Updates).
- Val would like to set an agenda item to discuss possible compensation for those translators who currently work as volunteers (as noted earlier in the Community Outreach Updates).
- Paul would like to set an agenda item to hear SOS's thoughts on the recommendations made by the LAAC regarding the NPP (No Party-Preference) notifications for the upcoming presidential primary.
- Pedro would like to set an agenda item (on behalf of Dean Logan) to explore county geography and language services.

## **7. Adjournment**