



# SHIRLEY N. WEBER, Ph.D.

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

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June 22, 2023

## Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC)

June 7, 2023, Meeting Minutes

**1. The meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m.**

### **2. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum**

Roll was called and quorum was established.

The following participants were marked as present:

#### Committee Members

- Armando Salud
- Dean Logan
- Jacqueline Coto
- Janet Bernabe
- Jeffrey Reeder
- Juan Pablo Cervantes
- Karduz Nguyen
- Naindeep Singh
- Paul Burke
- Pedro Hernandez
- Ramal Lamar-EI
- Savaliolefilmu (Val) Jacobo

#### Secretary of State Staff

- Jana Lean  
Chief of Elections
- Joanna Southard  
Assistant Chief of Elections
- NaKasha Robinson  
Information Technology  
Supervisor II
- Mike Somers  
Election Security Manager
- Adam Quintana  
Policy & Planning Manager,  
Voter's Choice Act
- Anakaren Monroy  
Associate Governmental  
Program Analyst
- Shannon Vellone  
Voter Engagement Services  
Manager

- Daneka Huynh  
Language Access Coordinator

- Ryan Reece  
VBM/Ballot Tracking Analyst

### 3. LAAC Members' Updates

Armando Salud

- Yolo County is working to improve attendance in their local LAAC and are continuing their outreach efforts, including specific efforts to encourage more contact with the Korean and Chinese-speaking communities.

Dean Logan

- Los Angeles County recently had a meeting with community voter outreach committee members focusing on legislation and potential changes that may come regarding language accessibility.

Deanna Kitamura

- Deanna was absent, but Pedro provided an update on her behalf. Her organization has created a report on voting access, and Pedro shared the report: <https://www.advancingjustice-alc.org/news-resources/guides-reports/voting-access-nov2022>

Jacqueline Coto

- Jacqueline's organization is focusing on advocacy efforts regarding AB 846, which concerns the Motor Voter program. They are concerned about the barriers regarding making language preferences through the DMV process, but the bill did not pass and is in suspense.

Janet Bernabe

- The Riverside LAAC met last month and are working to expand their efforts.

Jeffrey Reeder

- No updates.

Juan Pablo Cervantes

- No updates.

Karduz Nguyen

- Karduz shared that his organization had a successful AAPI Heritage month and are preparing for future event in October.

Naindeep Singh

- No updates.

Paul Burke

- Paul has been getting comments about how bilingual ballots have smaller type than English-only ballots. This issue is being addressed in current legislation, AB 1219, which Paul is hoping to discuss at the next LAAC meeting.

Pedro Hernandez

- Common Cause is reviewing their election protection work and the questions they have developed for volunteers. AB 884, which they've been working on, is in suspense on a two-year hold, and they will continue to work with stakeholders to understand their concerns and needs.

Ramal Lamar-EI

- Ramal's organization is focused on voter registration and outreach in various counties for communities that speak African languages, and they are preparing education materials in different languages on civics and voting.

Savaliiolefilmu (Val) Jacobo

- Val updated on recent Blue Shield events for AAPI Heritage month. Further events for Pride and Juneteenth are being planned. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander outreach just wrapped up Samoan language week. They are also working on providing the federal government with requested data on language groups. Recent work has also been done in outreach efforts to the Pacific Islander communities in preparation for the upcoming election cycle.

#### **4. SOS Updates**

Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA)

- NaKeshia Robinson provided election systems updates on the following systems:
  - ES&S Version 6.3.0.2 (voting system) has been approved as of 5/26/23.
  - Dominion Democracy Suite 5.17-A (voting system) is in application review.
  - ES&S Version 6.5.0.2 (voting system) is in application review.
  - Hart Verity Voting 3.2 (voting system) is in testing.
  - KNOWiNK Poll Pad 3 Version 3.4 (ePollBook) is in application review.

- KNOWiNK Poll Print Version 3.4 (ballot on demand system) is in application review.
- Tenex Precinct Central Touchpad Version 6 (ePollBook) is in application review.
- Runbeck Sentio Lite EVS and SPS 9.3 (ballot on demand system) is in post-testing.
- Pedro asked if any of these systems include support for newly added languages that require translation services. NaKasha said that the testing reports that are produced also include details on the different languages that the systems support.

#### Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- No updates from Adam Quintana.
- Pedro asked if any new counties are adopting the VCA model. Adam said there are three counties that are considering making the transition but are not prepared to publicly announce their intention at this time, except for Humboldt County. Humboldt is moving forward with the transition to VCA and agreed to make it public.
- Juan asked if the state is prepared to offer additional funding to VCA counties for their outreach efforts, specifically on language accessibility. Adam said there is no additional funding available at this time for VCA counties.
- Jacqueline asked about Placer County's status on becoming a VCA county. Adam said he cannot comment at this time about Placer County transitioning or not to the VCA. Adam explained he has not received approval to make anything public at this time.
- Val responded to Juan's question about funding and suggested that funding apart from SOS should be found for outreach efforts. Juan brought up how their county is experimenting with ranked choice voting and they are moving forward with efforts regarding this transition but need resources. Pedro suggested that this be made an agenda item for a later meeting to be further explored.

#### Legislative Affairs

- Anakaren Monroy from SOS offered updates on AB 243, which is a bill that focuses on the address confidentiality program for child abduction survivors. Their office is working with the bill's author on amendments to the bill which may delay the bill's possible implementation by six months.
- They are also monitoring AB 884, which is now in a two-year suspension.
- AB 77 is also being monitored, and this is a bill that would require diacritical marks to be recorded on birth, death, and marriage certificates. This bill has been placed in appropriations in a suspense file.

## 5. Presentation on African Languages in California

- Ramal presented on African Languages in California to improve the LAAC's knowledge and acquaint them with issues regarding these language groups in California. He gave an overview of the history of African language groups in the US and California and introduced the committee to some of the issues facing members of these language groups. These issues include a general misunderstanding among people concerning African language groups and a lack of appreciation of the needs of voters who speak these languages.
- Ramal also commented on the history of his own language group, which is Niger-Congo, and he educated the LAAC on some of the linguistical history and issues of this language family in order to elucidate on the larger challenges facing such language groups.
- Ramal remarked upon the importance of supporting people who wish to communicate in their original language as it can influence a person's mental and social well-being, as well as affect their relationship to government services. He opened the floor for questions following the end of his presentation.
- Pedro thanked Ramal for his presentation and for providing real lived experiences and challenges that he has faced regarding language accessibility. Pedro mentioned that he would like to get a better understanding of the African language communities that are out there, how many people live within them, and what dialects they speak. He said that the LAAC should try to look into gaining some data that could increase their understanding and asked Ramal if he could with him and Daneka on finding additional information that can be shared with the committee.
- Val encouraged Ramal to make a motion that would encourage the LAAC to advocate for African languages in the realm of election language accessibility. A discussion then took place regarding such a motion and what the LAAC might be able to offer in terms of support, while remaining within the purview of the committee. Not all members were in consensus regarding what the motion should state, with some mentioning that they were not fully aware of what specific type of support the LAAC could offer at this juncture, while others had concerns about the distinctions between African languages and the importance of being clear in identifying what groups the LAAC is seeking to support. After the motion was rewritten a few times, Ramal sponsored the following motion with a second from Val.
- Motion: That the LAAC commit itself to understanding and advocating for African languages in California and to find ways to support these communities.
- Motion passed, 7-0, with 5 abstentions.

## **6. Ballot Labels and Titles and Summaries**

- Daneka presented on the advisory process for the translations of the State Voter Information Guide (VIG) and the ballots, including updates to the timeline and changes due to AB 1416 which requires there to be a list of supporters and opponents for all measures on the ballot. There will be two rounds of translation review by the advisory body, and they will be conducted on a tight schedule, with the second round during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Counties that have volunteers who speak these languages should be prepared for organizing those volunteers so that they can conduct this review phase in the short window that will be open. Committee members were asked to check with their communities for anyone who may be interested in joining the advisory body to review translations and to send Daneka their contact information.
- Dean stated that the list of languages doesn't include languages that certain counties, like Los Angeles, must translate their materials into. There was a clarification that this is only for statewide elections and the languages listed reflect the languages the state is mandated to translate materials into.
- Paul seconded Dean's comments and said that Ventura has the same challenge and he asked if Daneka can inform the committee when the English text will be available for counties to begin their translations. Joanna responded that the ballot labels for all statewide propositions will be available on the first day of public display of the VIG on November 21. Paul was also wondering if the counties that have additional languages they need to provide translations for could receive the English version early, but Joanna confirmed that they will have to wait for the public display period to begin on November 21.

## **7. Outreach to No Party Preference Voters Ahead of the March 2024 Presidential Primary Election**

- Dean talked about the need for voter outreach to make sure voters understand how the primaries work for No Party Preference (NPP) voters, especially for people who speak languages apart from English. He encouraged the LAAC to seek out best practices for how to reach out to voters to minimize both confusion and the resources required to reissue ballots for voters who end up requesting cross-over ballots.
- Pedro mentioned that a subcommittee would be helpful to create such best practices and to do it in the timeline we have.
- Karduz asked when the parties will be making the determination to allow cross-over voting, and Daneka said she would find out when the deadline is.
  - Political parties must notify the SOS no later than 135 days before Election Day, which would be October 22, 2023, for the upcoming March 5, 2024 Primary.
- Paul sponsored a motion, seconded by Ramal.

- Motion: Move to form a subcommittee to discuss best ways to inform language communities about specific aspects of the March primary.
- The motion passed, 12-0 in favor.
- Karduz, Paul and Ramal all volunteered to form the initial subcommittee. Deanna was recommended to join. Daneka will coordinate with the members.

## **8. High School/Youth Voter Outreach**

- Karduz presented to the LAAC his PowerPoint slideshow, “Collaborating for Youth Empowerment: Enhancing Language Voter Outreach”.
- Karduz emphasized the importance of conducting outreach to young people specifically in language communities to prepare them for becoming voters. He stressed that this work should go beyond high school and include earlier ages in order to foster an enthusiasm and understanding of the democratic process among youth.
- Karduz spoke about existing outreach programs that engage with young people, including SOS and county initiatives like mock elections, pre-registration, and high school voter education weeks. He suggested that SOS and county ROVs look to establish relationships with other community-based organizations and languages groups that work with youth in order to collaborate on voter education programs. These organizations can offer resources, contacts, and can coordinate events and drives to encourage engagement with young people. Language schools and organizations that work within language groups can also facilitate outreach efforts to youth who speak languages other than English.

## **9. County LAAC Toolkit**

- The LAAC has been asked to update the County LAAC Toolkit, which is designed to assist counties in organizing their local LAACs. Pedro said that he believes it is time to create a subcommittee to focus on updating the toolkit. A motion was made by Pedro and was seconded by Ramal.
- Motion: To establish a subcommittee to update the County LAAC Toolkit.
- Motion passed, 9-0 in favor.
- Pedro, Ramal, and Jacqueline all volunteered to form the initial subcommittee. Daneka will coordinate with the members.

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

- Public Comments:
  - No public comments were made.

- Future agenda items include updates from the new subcommittees, reviewing the support for African language groups, a discussion on ballot simplifications, and exploring funding opportunities for outreach efforts.
- Remaining 2023 meetings – August 2, October 4, December 6 – will be held at 10:00 a.m.

**11. Adjournment at 4:07 p.m.**

Next meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, August 2, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.