



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, September 30, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order

2. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

LAAC members present:

- Rahmo Abdi
- Anabel Alonzo
- Greta Arevalo
- Janet Bernabe
- Paul Burke
- Pedro Hernandez
- Deanna Kitamura
- Clarrisa Laguardia
- Gloria Lizbeth Oviedo
- Rosie Rascon
- Fangchun Tsai
- Cindy Wu

Members of SOS present:

- Kirsten Larsen – Election Administration Manager
- Mike Somers – Election Security Program Manager
- Jeff Nelson – Election Security Unit Manager
- William Goltra – Voter Access Translations Coordinator
- Jason Ando – Office of Voting Systems (OVSTA)
- 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 (July 22, 2026)**

Motion to adopt minutes put forth by Cindy Wu; seconded by Deanna Kitamura.
Vote:

Yea: Rahmo Abdi, Janet Bernabe, Paul Burke, Pedro Hernandez, Deanna Kitamura, Clarissa Laguardia, Gloria Lizbeth Oviedo, Fangchun Tsai, Cindy Wu.
Abstain: Greta Arevalo.

Motion carried.

5. **LAAC Member Updates**

- **Clarrisa Laguardia**

- The California Center for Civic Participation will host a community activation event—the Capital Backyard Party—on voter education at the capital this Sunday (09.27.2026). The Center has 300-400 RSVPs and is hoping for upwards of 500 RSVPs. The Center will share relevant information on the November 3, 2026, General Election, which will include information on language accessibility. The event intends to help to normalize caring for your community through an immersive, interactive experience.

- **Deanna Kitamura**

- Asian Law Caucus and California Common Cause will conduct poll monitoring for the November 3, 2026, General Election. The poll monitoring will cover approximately 30 counties in California. They already have 900 volunteers to assist with poll monitoring. They will also conduct a vote count monitoring at a selection of these counties during the first three days after polls close.
- In addition, the Legislature passed and the governor signed SB 1360. The bill codifies federal language access law, but it would apply to any language minority group that reaches the threshold. The bill also includes a petition process for groups who are not properly captured by the census to petition to the Secretary of State (SOS) for entitlement to language assistance.

- **Paul Burke**

- During the previous LAAC meeting, it was stated that there is a check-in form that counties require voters to complete when they cast their ballots at polling locations. This form is used in lieu of requiring voters to state their personal information out loud to election workers. After that LAAC

meeting, Paul forwarded to relevant individuals a copy of the Ventura County form that voters complete which is available in English and Spanish.

- **Rahmo Abdi**

- The Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA) is executing voter education sessions in various languages, as well as phone banking for 11 days up to the November 3, 2026, General Election. PANA will also function as a vote center in City Heights in San Diego County to help facilitate voting in the County. The vote center will be open from October 23 until the end of Election Day on November 3.

- **Pedro Hernandez**

- Common Cause worked with the California Democracy Partnership on the California Voting Rights Act of 2026 (SB 1360) which codifies federal protections but expands the languages that would qualify for translated election material in California. He said that he has had constructive conversations with counties about how to practically implement the legislation. He expressed gratitude for the willingness of counties to engage and find solutions to problems with relevant parties throughout the development of SB 1360. He has also expressed gratitude for the SOS's engagement during this process. He said that he understands that the SOS has comments regarding SB 1360 and expressed his desire to continue to work with SOS as SB 1360 becomes law. He also thanked those who sent letters of support to the Legislature for SB 1360.

- **Rosie Rascon**

- Rosie explained that San Diego County is hosting Voter Education workshops and that they are providing the workshops in all 15 languages in which the County is required to provide translated election materials. The workshops are both in-person and virtual. These workshops are posted on the website of the San Diego County Registrar of Voters.

6. **Secretary of State Updates**

- **Kirsten Larsen**

- Kirsten provided an update pursuant to a previous request from the LAAC to receive information related to the allocation of funds to counties for vote counting and voter outreach pursuant to SB 111. Specifically, \$29 million was allocated to assist with vote counting and \$5 million was allocated to outreach. Information related to the funding breakdown for this money is on the website of the SOS. In addition, \$250,000 was allocated to support, strengthen, and protect the administration of the November 3, 2026, General Election. The SOS is still determining how this funding will be spent.

- **Mike Somers**

- Pursuant to the LAAC's recommendation to the SOS to analyze the use of WeChat and LINE as two means to communicate election-related information with voters, Language Access and Election Security staff at the SOS conducted a review of the two applications. The review concluded that security concerns including device-level risks, unrestricted data collection, and legal complications due to foreign ownership of the companies present a significant risk to critical election infrastructure. Staff also found that other federal, state, and local governments have prohibited employees from using the applications for official use. As such, staff determined that the SOS should not use these applications in an official capacity. Nevertheless, staff recommend that the office continue to work with the LAAC and other trusted sources of information to provide translated election information to voters and community partners.

Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- **Joshua Robinson**

- The VCA Task Force is finalizing the supplemental section of the November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election. The section focuses on data collected by UCLA and Sacramento State. The Task Force is also working on its report for the June 2, 2026, Primary Election. The VCA team internal to the SOS has been preparing reports for the June 2, 2026, Primary Election which are due to the Legislature in December. Earlier this year, the VCA team updated the VCA Ambassadors Program to become two different programs: VCA Outreach Partners, which entails community groups and nonprofits in VCA counties, and Democracy Ambassadors, which is designed for individuals throughout California and includes materials for ambassadors on how to have an influence in their communities, how to register to vote, and resources related to obtaining accurate information and rejecting misinformation. VCA Outreach Partners will receive a social media toolkit next week (week of 10.05) and they will meet during a virtual call on October 8. Joshua clarified that the toolkit is currently in English and Spanish and that it will soon be translated into other languages. If an organization is interested in becoming a VCA outreach partner, please visit: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/voters-choice-act/vca-outreach-program>. If you would like to become a democracy ambassador, please visit: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/democracy-ambassador>.

Voting Systems Testing (OVSTA)

- **Rodney Rodriguez**

- Hart Verity 3.2.2 voting system is in the post-testing phase. Elections Systems and Software (ES&S) has the EVS 6.5.2.0 voting system in testing. OVSTA had to stop testing due to pre-election activities. OVSTA

will continue testing the system in December. OVSTA will send an email to the public requesting that members of the public assist with the accessible portion of the testing. There are two new voting systems that entities are trying to introduce in California. Smartmatic's VSR1 2.1 system is in full certification and is currently under application review. Testing is not expected until the first quarter of next year. In addition, OVSTA intends to review Voting Works VX suit 4.1 voting system during the second or third quarter of next year. Democracy Live Secure Select 1.2.6 is in pre-testing.

Legislation

- **Paige Kent**

- Paige reiterated the statements made regarding SB 1360. Paige stated that the Legislature passed and chaptered the sister bill to this legislation, SB 1164, on September 19. While AB 1360 was specific to language access, SB 1164 is more general and concerns prohibiting vote dilution and voter suppression, as well as creating pathways for voters to challenge election policies. It repeals and replaces the California Voter Rights Act and enshrines the federal Voter Rights Act into state law.

7. Presentation by Dēmos on its report, “The Impact of Language Assistance on Voter Turnout: Lessons from California.”

- **Jens Manuel Krogstad:** The report is based on an academic paper titled, “Assessing Multilingual Language Material Usage and Impact Through Administrative Data”, by Fraga, Khoshkoo, Lee, and Nguyen. The key takeaway from the paper is that turnout was higher among counties covered by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act and Section 14201 of California Elections Code. The paper compared counties in California that had language access coverage to counties in California that did not have language access coverage. The covered counties had voter turnout that was approximately 7-14% higher than comparable counties with no language access coverage.
- Section 203 coverage in counties was associated with 13%, 12%, 10%, and 8% increase in voter turnout among Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Khmer, respectively. Similarly, Section 14201 coverage in counties was associated with 16% and 14% increase in voter turnout among Filipino and Korean, respectively. In addition, Thai was 13%, Chinese, Khmer, and Hindi were 7%, Korean was 4%, and Japanese was 3% higher among Section 14201 covered counties. The data also showed that there was demand for language access—there were more than 1 million requests for voting materials in languages other than English.
 - Recommendations from the report are found in the presentation slides embedded on the LAAC webpage.
- **Pedro Hernandez:** Pedro reiterated the finding demonstrating that voter turnout was higher among counties with Section 203 and Section 14201 coverage. He explained that although the report does not demonstrate that language coverage increased voter turnout, the findings still suggest that it is important to provide

translated election materials pursuant to Section 203 and Section 14201 requirements as voter turnout rates are higher among these covered counties. He also reiterated the finding that individuals are in fact requesting translated materials, which reveals that there is a real demand for translated materials that could impact voter turnout.

- **Anabel Alonzo:** Anabel asked if the LAAC has previously shared best practices or suggestions for counties on how facsimile ballots are shared with voters. Pedro Hernandez and Deanna Kitamura both stated that such best practices have not been shared during their tenure on the LAAC. Pedro stated that counties have followed different practices around the presentation of facsimile materials. Pedro and Deanna expressed support for the LAAC to develop best practices on how facsimile ballots are shared with voters.
- **Gloria Lizbeth Oviedo:** Gloria explained that in Santa Clara County, in addition to providing facsimile ballots at vote centers, the County mails the facsimile ballots to voters who request a facsimile ballot at the time of registration. The County has documented notable increases in the request for facsimile ballots amongst recently added languages that the County must provide facsimile ballots in, such as Punjabi and Korean. She explained that once voters know that facsimile ballots are available, the requests for the facsimile ballots increase.
- **Pedro Hernandez:** Pedro stated that he has some ideas on how to facilitate collaboration and data-gathering in terms of language access. He intends to collaborate with California language access groups and members of the Democracy Partnership. He added that stakeholders and local county officials should discuss what data could be collected to better understand the impact of language access on turnout and other election-related matters.

8. Working Groups Updates

- **Pedro Hernandez:** Pedro clarified that working groups need to bring their recommendations to the LAAC for discussion and approval before the recommendations are sent to the SOS for consideration. Pedro reiterated that he appreciates the time that the working groups have committed to researching issues and developing recommendations but affirmed that the committee must follow this process to appropriately facilitate healthy discussion, approval, and execution of these recommendations. Pedro also stated that any documentation that is used to support a recommendation must be provided to the SOS at least 15 calendar days before each LAAC meeting. This advance allows staff at the Office of the SOS to review the documentation and, as needed, require corrections to the documentation before the documentation is published online.
- **Translation Quality and Language Access Standards**

- The working group did not have enough time to share its recommendation with the committee. It will share its recommendation with the committee during the next LAAC meeting in December.
- **Budgeting, Operations, and Compliance**
 - The working group did not have an update. Pedro Hernandez clarified that the working group will meet after the election.
- **Community Engagement and Culturally Responsive Outreach**
 - **Clarrisa Laguardia:** Clarissa stated that the working group is conducting work related to best practices on how individuals, including election officers, and entities can work with community-based organizations to create culturally appropriate outreach materials, as well as the development of an interactive map to identify LAAC partners by region and issue area.
 - **Pedro Hernandez:** Pedro recommended that the working group review the County LAAC Toolkit and determine whether its work could be added to the toolkit. If so, its work could by extension be shared with the counties.
- **Technology and Digital Outreach Tools**
 - **Cindy Wu:** Cindy thanked staff at the SOS for the work that they conducted in assessing the feasibility of the recommendation of the working group related to WeChat and LINE. She then stated that the working group would like to recommend that the SOS post information in languages other than English to make this information accessible to other language groups. Cindy shared an example of a multilingual poster that the SOS could post.
 - **Paul Burke:** Paul stated that the poster appears in English because the first third of it is in English. He stated that it would be more effective if text in foreign languages was predominantly displayed at the top of the poster so that viewers are aware that this poster is multilingual.
 - **Gloria Lizbeth Oviedo:** Gloria stated that the poster should be translated in its entirety into the various required languages, rather than the poster be in English and only partially in other languages.
 - **Cindy Wu:** Cindy clarified that the poster is an example of what the SOS could post. She said that the committee recommends that the SOS post multilingual posts on social media and use this poster as an example to help guide what these posts could look like.

Motion to *recommend that the Office of the SOS share multilingual posts on social media in all Section 203 languages and consider the shared poster as an example of what could be posted* put forth by Pedro; seconded by Greta.

Vote:

Yea: Rahmo Abdi, Greta Averado, Janet Bernabe, Paul Burke, Pedro Hernandez, Deanna Kitamura, Clarissa Laguardia, Gloria Lizbeth Oviedo, Rosie Rascon, Fangchun Tsai, Cindy Wu.

Motion carried.

9. **Future Agenda Items**

- **Pedro Hernandez:** Pedro stated that the LAAC should discuss implementation of SB 1360 and the role of the LAAC in its implementation. This discussion may be an agenda item for the LAAC in 2027 after the law comes into effect.

10. **Adjournment**