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Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, February 25, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. **Welcome, Call to Order**
2. **New Committee Members Swearing-In**
3. **Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum**

VAAC members present:

- Fred Nisen
- Veronica Elsea
- Aarron Nevarez
- Mike Nguyen
- Rebecca Donabed
- Mary Helen Gallagos
- Roxana Castro
- Veronica Langworthy
- Emily Gorodetskiy
- Armando Salud- Ambriz

Members of SOS:

- Justin Hirai – Election Security Unit Manager
- Kirsten Larsen – Election Administration Manager
- Joanna Southard- Election Staff Service Manager
- Rodney Rodriguez – Office of Voting Systems (OVSTA)
- Adam Quintana – Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
- Lauro Feliciano– Legislation

Quorum was met.

4. **Public Comments**

During each committee meeting we will hold an agenda spot for public comment/presentation.

- The public comment portion of the hearing is an opportunity for members of the public to make comments regarding today's agenda item(s). This is not a question-and-answer session, just an opportunity to provide comments. There are other members of the public here today to make comments. While their opinion may differ from yours, everyone is asked to provide all speakers with the courtesy and respect you would want if you were speaking. If you have a specific question regarding voting accessibility, please submit it to vaac@sos.ca.gov.

5. Review of Bagley- Keene Act

- The Act includes rules designed to ensure that state boards and commissions meet publicly at locations open to the public, post agendas that can't be deviated from without prior notice to the public, and refrain from contemplating items of interest outside of such public meetings and agenda requirements
- Outside of an open and public meeting, the Act expressly prohibits a majority of the members of a state body to communicate, in any manner, about a topic of interest to that state body. (Gov. Code, § 11122.5(b).)
- Members of the public are entitled to record and to broadcast the meetings (via audio and/or video), unless this would constitute a persistent disruption. (Gov. Code, § 11124.1.)
- All votes taken during a teleconferenced meeting shall be by **roll call** ("yeas" and "nays"), with a record of how each member votes. (Gov. Code, § 11123(b)(1)(D).)

6. VAAC Policy and Procedures

Like the previous item, you should have all received the Policy and Procedures guide. This is also posted on our website. Hopefully you have all reviewed the document, but we would like to bring attention to these specific items:

- You have all been appointed because you demonstrated experience working or volunteering in diverse communities, particularly those with respect to voting accessibility.
- You have demonstrated experience in voting rights policy, representing voters with disabilities, with voter education, outreach, and engagement efforts, particularly with respect to voting accessibility, and in policy analysis, development, and advocacy.

- Being part of VAAC you are responsible for making recommendations for improving access to voting and election materials.
- The Secretary of State shall consult with and consider the recommendations of the committee. The committee shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Secretary of State.
- The committee is responsible for advising on ways to improve voter access for individuals with disabilities.
- SOS updates will be specific to voting accessibility.
- A quorum of a majority of the members must be present for any committee business.
- Agendas and meeting notices will be prepared, finalized, posted, and sent out at least 10 days before a scheduled meeting. All committee members who wish to share documents or presentation material during a meeting must submit their documents to the Secretary of State, 16 calendar days prior to next meeting date. Documents must be submitted in a digital format, to ensure ease of distribution and access for all members. Late submissions will not be accepted, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and will not be included in the meeting agenda.
- If members are participating remotely, all members must remain visible on video unless technologically impractical.
- Members of the State VAAC must adopt the meeting minutes from the previous meeting before the meeting minutes are posted for public viewing.

7. Co- Chair Nomination

- **Mike Nguyen:** is from the San Francisco Bay Area and is proudly serving his second term on the Committee, with a mission to help the voters of California stay informed and express their voices in democracy. He has previously served on the Committee's Petitions/Signature Verification Working Group.

He is currently a first-generation undergraduate student at the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to his appointment to the Committee, Mr. Nguyen served in local office as Commissioner, representing nearly half a million youth in the County of Santa Clara. He also serves on the County Registrar of Voters' Language Accessibility and Voting Accessibility Advisory Committees, known as the LAAC and VAAC. As a

leader, he has focused on advancing public welfare through educational advocacy, civic engagement, and food security.

- **Armando Salud-Ambriz:** is a dynamic and accomplished leader in election administration and civic engagement. As the Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters for Nevada County, he has a proven track record of successfully managing all aspects of election administration while advancing transparency, accessibility, and public trust in the democratic process.

Armando is a Certified Elections/Registration Administrator, a California Registered Election Official, and a Credentialed California County Senior Executive. His commitment to excellence extends beyond his work in Nevada County. He earned his Master of Public Administration from the University of the Pacific's McGeorge School of Law and currently serves as the youngest County Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters in the State of California. He was also the youngest person ever elected to the Yolo County Board of Education.

Armando has been a member of the Election Center since 2018 and previously served on the steering committee for the National Voter Registration Day organization. He is also a founding board member of the Greater Sacramento Chapter of the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA). Since its inception, he has served on the State's Language Accessibility Advisory Committee and was most recently reappointed as Co-Chair. Armando will also serve his first term on the State's Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee.

- **Roxana Castro:** Serves as a Community Program Specialist at the Orange County Registrar of Voters, where she plays a pivotal role in ensuring accessible and inclusive elections. Her responsibilities encompass overseeing various aspects of in-person voting, including Vote Center recruitment, Vote Center accessibility program, and community outreach, with a specific focus on connecting with the disability community. This is Roxana's second term in the California's Secretary of State's Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- **Emily Gorodetskiy:** Is a youth civic innovator and nonprofit leader committed to expanding voter education and strengthening democratic participation, especially among young people and those with barriers to the process. She is the creator of *VR'ing Democracy*, an internationally recognized virtual reality civic education initiative that helps first-time voters understand the voting process and democratic systems through immersive learning. Her work focuses on making civic participation more accessible to individuals navigating the electoral system for the first time.

Emily also serves as CEO of the Youth Entrepreneurship Association (YEA), a national nonprofit advancing entrepreneurial education and youth leadership. She is also a member of the Harvard Graduate School of Education MCC Youth Advisory Board and the United Nations Association of San Francisco Youth Committee. Through her civic work, Emily has represented youth perspectives as a UN delegate at CSW70 and was recognized as an Innovation World 20 Under 20 Honoree.

- **Fred Nisen:** Is the Managing Attorney for Disability Rights California's (DRC) Voting Rights Practice Group. DRC is California's federally mandated protection and advocacy system. Mr. Nisen has been working for DRC for over 25 years. He has advocated for the voting rights of people with disabilities for more than 15 years and has been in a leadership role with DRC's voting advocacy for a little over a decade. Under his leadership, DRC operates a busy Voting Hotline for voters with disabilities, participates in legislative advocacy, trains voters with disabilities and election worker trainers, and improves voting accessibility primarily by working with county elections officials and the Secretary of State's office.
- **Rebecca Donabed:** I am the Community Organizer and the ADA coordinator at Resources for Independence Central Valley (RICV) in Visalia. The counties that I serve: Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, and Merced. We are a consumer based, consumer run organization.
As the community organizer, I'm on a lot of committees and advisory boards such as Social Service Transportation Advisory Committee (SSTAC) and Tulare County Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) and the Statewide Self Advocacy Network (SSAN). I have also been a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD). I also do group and individual advocacy training, train businesses on disability etiquette, and leadership training. I help with voter workshops, and training poll workers on voters with disabilities
- **Aaron Nevarez:** Has worked for the County of Los Angeles for 22 years. For the last 11, he has been with the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk where he currently serves as an Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. In his capacity managing the Department's Election Operations and Logistics Bureau, he is responsible for overseeing the in-person voting operations in Los Angeles County, the largest and most diverse local election jurisdiction in the United States with over 5.8 million voters. During Statewide elections he oversees the operations of over 420 Drop Boxes, almost 650 Vote Centers, and approximately 10,000 Election Workers. He also currently serves as a Co-Chair for the California Association of Clerks and Election Official's Voters with Specific Needs Committee. Prior to his current role, he served as the Department's Project Director during the

County's implementation of the Voting Solutions for All People (VSAP) Initiative and its transition to the California Voter's Choice Act.

- **Mary Helen Gallagos:** is a dedicated member of Monterey County Elections with over 12 years of experience. She oversees precinct services, handling everything from securing polling places to recruiting and training colleagues. Maryanne has been involved with the voting accessibility advisory committee from the beginning and is excited for another season of serving the community.
- **Veronica Elsea:** a musician and composer from Santa Cruz, has been a member of the state voting accessibility committee (VAAC) for two terms and is starting her third term. She has been involved in the Santa Cruz County VAAC since 2006 when accessible voting machines were first introduced. Despite being totally blind, Veronica has actively participated in the election processes at both local and state levels for many years and looks forward to continuing her involvement in the future.
- **Veronica Langworthy:** I am a lifelong Californian. Born in the Bay area, grew up in Silicon Valley, attended University in Central California and now living in Southern California and registered to vote in Riverside County. I love reading, researching, and helping others. I've reviewed many reports, documents, and election related data from government sources, the SOS website, and our county during recent years. I have a Master of Arts in Special Education. I have Relevant recent experience helping people with disabilities ranging in age from young adults to senior citizens. I have experience of public speaking before various government boards and councils. I support civil rights and equal access for all eligible citizens to vote. I am honored to be appointed to the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee and will serve to the best of my abilities.
- Veronica Elsea Nominated herself
Veronica Langworthy seconds for Veronica
- Fred Nisen Nominated himself
Mike Nguyen seconds Fred

Committee votes 10 yes for Fred Nisen and Veronica Elsea for Co-chairs for the 2026/2027 committee term.

8. Committee Goals Discussion

- Previous Term working groups:
 - Petition/ Signature Verifications

- Outreach to voters with Disabilities
- Increasing accessibility for voters who use ASL

- Data Driven accessibility concerns and possible solutions
- Legislation that impacts voters with disability
- SOS updates on legislation
- Mechanism / outreach for voters with low vision or blind
- Improve website accessibility

9. Future Agenda Items

- Next meeting is April 20, 2026
- Update from SOS on ASL Accessibility Working Groups-Best Practice Recommendations
- Establish working group for the new term

10. Adjournment