

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, May 27, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

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

Meeting called to order at 1:32 p.m. by host Ryan Reece. Quorum was not met as of 1:35 p.m.

VAAC members present:

- Veronica Elsea (Chair)
- Fred Nisen (Chair)
- Veronica Langworthy
- Aaron Nevarez
- Roxanna Castro
- Emily Gorodetskiy

2. Public Comment

This time is reserved for public presentations on matters not appearing on the agenda. Speakers are limited to two (2) minutes each.

- **Veronica Elsea:** Noted ongoing challenges for blind individuals utilizing Vote 411. A comment was previously submitted to the League of Women Voters, but no progress has been made to date.

3. Adoption of Previous Meeting Minutes (February 25, 2026)

Fred Nisen and Veronica Elsea were named co-chairs during the previous meeting. Since then, operational updates were reviewed regarding work groups. Previously, work groups maintained 3 members each. Under the Bagley-Keene Act, if a work group consists of 3 or more individuals, the chairs must publish a public meeting notice 10 days in advance and open the proceedings to the public. This requirement presents significant scheduling difficulties. Conversely, limiting groups to 2 or fewer members risks overburdening a single individual if the other member cannot attend. The co-chairs intended to hold a committee vote to select a preferred structure.

Additionally, Veronica Elsea requested that future meeting minutes be distributed directly via email attachment to all committee members, noting that the February 25 minutes were only posted online and not emailed.

4. VAAC Member Updates

- **Fred Nisen:** Representing Disability Rights California (DRC), noted that their year-round voting hotline (888-569-7955) will be fully staffed on Mondays and Tuesdays to support voters in partnership with election officials. DRC has also been conducting voter rights training across the disability community to prepare individuals for this year's elections.
- **Roxanna Castro:** Orange County held its county VAAC meeting in April. Based on member feedback, the county is updating its Vote-by-Mail (VBM) envelopes to include a QR code linking directly to the community accessibility page.
- **Aaron Nevarez:** Los Angeles County held its last VAAC in February, providing updates on ESP 4.0 voting systems. LA County partnered with DRC to conduct accessibility testing and train election workers on the importance of supporting voters with disabilities. Overall voting is going well, and the county is tracking the DRC hotline.
- **Veronica Langworthy:** In Riverside County, senior voters have expressed confusion regarding the statewide Voter Information Guide (VIG). Previously, vote center locations were printed directly under the voter's name; now, voters must flip through the booklet to find them. Seniors also expressed confusion regarding VIG language detailing VBM ballot rejections (e.g., late arrivals, missing, or non-matching signatures).

Discussion:

- Veronica Elsea asked how blind individuals would identify the new QR code on Orange County's envelopes. Roxanna Castro noted that they are continuing to evaluate methods to maximize accessibility.
- In response to Veronica Elsea's inquiry regarding recent evacuation impacts, Roxanna Castro confirmed that some drop boxes and vote centers were temporarily impacted by a chemical evacuation in Garden Grove. As a Voter's Choice Act (VCA) county, they successfully adjusted by closing one center for two days and opening a single-day location. The evacuation has since been lifted and operations have returned to normal.
- Emily Gorodetskiy experienced connectivity issues and dropped out of the meeting temporarily.
- Veronica Elsea recommended that the Secretary of State (SOS) expand outreach efforts regarding VIG changes.

5. Secretary of State Updates

Voting Systems Testing (OVSTA)

- **Hart Verity 3.2.2:** System testing is currently in progress, including 1 RAVBM and 1 Pollbook system.
- **Democracy Live Secure Select (RAVBM):** Currently in pre-testing; an upcoming full certification phase is planned.
- **Knowlnk Poll Print 4.02 (Ballot on Demand):** Currently in the testing phase with full certification planned.
- **Liberty:** Last updated in late 2024. Fred Nisen noted that the latest update demonstrated slight improvements.
- **Verity Testing (Democracy Live and ES&S):** No definitive completion timeline is established; testing is targeting Summer, and updates will follow.

Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

The VCA Task Force has met monthly since January. The legislative report regarding the Statewide Special Election was submitted to the Legislature earlier this month and is available online. Because VoteCal data was unavailable during the initial 6-month drafting window, the Task Force is currently compiling a supplemental report focused on VoteCal metrics. Following this, focus will shift to Primary Election data. The SOS VCA team is finalizing reports from the Statewide Special Election. Upcoming evaluations include a voter participation analysis by race and ethnicity conducted by UCLA, alongside a participation report from CSUS (last conducted in 2022). The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for June 11 to review the Special Election report. The team can be reached at voterschoice@sos.ca.gov.

Discussion:

- **Fred Nisen asked** how the main report could be finalized without the corresponding VoteCal data. Dana Davenport clarified that the report was divided into non-data-dependent sections managed by 2-person working groups, covering the history of the VCA, the unique nature of the Special Election, and experiential accessibility/security data.

Resources Shared:

- VCA Task Force Final Report: <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/vca/taskforce/vctaskforce-final-report.pdf>
- VCA Task Force Homepage: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/voters-choice-act/voters-choice-task-force>
- VCA Election Reports: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/voters-choice-act/vca-election-reports>

6. Legislation

- **SB 1164:** Moved to the Assembly. The bill seeks to repeal and replace the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) and codify Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act. The office is monitoring it closely.
- **AB 1360 (Cervantes):** Moved to the Assembly. The bill attempts to lower the numeric threshold utilized by officials to determine when translated language materials are required for elections.

7. Establishment of Working Groups

The committee reviewed the necessary parameters for establishing new working groups, including sizing restrictions under the Bagley-Keene Act, focus designations, and member assignments. Veronica Langworthy inquired about the total number of subcommittees and whether the intent of the Bagley-Keene Act was to force all subcommittees into public sessions. Veronica Elsea clarified that the act is designed to provide public insight into subcommittee operations, and structural details must be voted on in order.

Motion on Group Size:

- **Motion:** Fred Nisen moved to restrict work group sizes to a maximum of 2 members.
- **Second:** Armando Salud-Ambriz seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

- Fred Nisen: Yes
- Veronica Elsea: Yes
- Armando Salud-Ambriz: Yes
- Veronica Langworthy: Yes
- Aaron Nevarez: Yes
- Roxanna Castro: Not present
- Mary Helen: Not present
- Emily Gorodetskiy: Not present

Status: Quorum was not met; therefore, the vote is invalid. The motion is tabled until an additional member becomes available.

Key Discussion Points:

- Veronica Elsea reminded members that this is an advisory committee and emphasized the long-term impact of work group actions. She shared a personal example regarding petition signing, noting how a lack of address formatting

options invalidated her own signatures, and urged members to keep these practical barriers in mind.

- Members were invited to prepare work group concepts ahead of the next meeting. Fred Nisen added that subcommittees greatly improve the overall operational efficiency of the full committee.
- Veronica Langworthy asked if the meeting was still being officially recorded despite the lack of a quorum. Ryan Reece confirmed that recording was active.

Suggested Work Groups:

- Data-driven accessibility concerns and corresponding solutions.

8. Increasing Accessibility to Voters Who Use ASL

Fred Nisen reported that during the previous term, the ASL working group submitted a collection of recommended best practices to the Secretary of State for county distribution. This occurred immediately following the last meeting, and positive feedback has been received from counties beginning implementation. The group consisted of Fred Nisen, Mary Helen, and Rebecca.

Ryan Reece confirmed that the documentation was formally distributed to counties on March 30 via CCROV #26072.

9. Future Agenda Items

- Discussion and formal creation of Working Groups
- Review of the Election Report

10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned.

ACTION ITEMS

- **SOS Staff:** Distribute the previous meeting minutes directly to committee members via email attachment for review ahead of future meetings.