



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

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, July 15, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order

2. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

LAAC members present:

- Fred Nisen
- Veronica Elsea
- Armando Salud-Ambriz
- Veronica Langworthy
- Aaron Nevarez
- Roxana Castro
- Rebecca Donabed
- Mike Nguyen

Members of SOS:

- Kirsten Larsen – Election Administration Manager
- Jeff Nelson – Election Security Unit Manager
- Ryan Reece – Elections Analyst
- William Goltra – Voter Access Translations Coordinator
- Jason Ando – Information Technology Specialist, Office of Voting Systems Testing
- 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.

4. Adoption of Previous Meeting Minutes (February 25, 2026 & May 27, 2026)

Motion to adopt minutes put forth by Aaron Nevarez from the meeting on February 25, 2026; seconded by Fred Nisen.

Vote:

Yea: Fred Nisen, Veronica Elsea, Armando Salud-Ambriz, Veronica Langworthy, Aaron Nevarez, Roxana Castro, Rebecca Donabed, Mike Nguyen

Motion carried.

Motion to adopt minutes put forth by Roxana Castro from the meeting on May 27, 2026; seconded by Veronica Langworthy. As part of the motion, Roxana included that the meeting minutes be amended to correct the spelling of her name from, Roxanna, to, Roxana.

Vote:

Yea: Fred Nisen, Veronica Elsea, Armando Salud-Ambriz, Veronica Langworthy, Aaron Nevarez, Roxana Castro, Mike Nguyen

Abstain: Rebecca Donabed

Motion carried.

5. VAAC Member Updates

- **Fred Nisen**

- Fred stated that Disability Rights California (DRC) had a hotline for the June Primary election. Fred stated that he would provide further information on the hotline later in the agenda. Fred stated that DRC intends to create a specific voting portion on its website. He explained that DRC hopes to have this portion of the website up and running by September in time for National Disability Rights Voting Week.

- **Rebecca Donabed**

- In Fresno County, the Fresno County Registrar of Voter's office put on a voter's workshop that gives voters the opportunity to learn how to vote, use voting machines, and ask general questions about voting. The County added two new languages. The total number of voters that voted in the November election was 20,000. The vote-by-mail average was 90%. Although the County helps voters who are deaf by providing said voters with an interpreter provided that the voters give 48-hour notice, the County only has one interpreter.
- In Tulare County, during the November 2025 elections, 5.4% of voters voted in-person, 37% of voters used vote-by-mail, and under 1% was a provisional or CVR ballot. Rebecca stated that in May 2026, she is going to help train pole workers about voters with disabilities etiquette. In Merced County, voters that are registered to vote are at about 137,000 and are growing. Many college students are registering to vote. 14 voting centers are open. 3 of the 14 are 11-day voting centers. In Madera County, the VAAC met for the first time in a while. The VAAC is unsure

how to address concerns with ASL. The committee decided to work on it in preparation for the November Election. Rebecca suggested that the committee speak with Merced County Voters of Registrar about the county's video service. The VAAC is going to speak with public transportation to determine whether the county can make rides free for voters.

- **Aaron Nevarez**

- Aaron stated that Los Angeles County experienced a very smooth election. He stated that the County is going to continue to engage with its partners at DRC related to any issues that were addressed via the DRC hotline. The County offered ASL at all the County's vote centers. Aaron acknowledged that other counties have expressed a desire for ASL service so Los Angeles County will look further into this. ASL services are also something that the County is looking to engage in with the CACEO Voters with Specific Needs Committee. Aaron stated that the ASL checklist that the VAAC established was helpful and that implementing the checklist into vote centers is the next step. Aaron further stated that the County is also focused on the new state-wide training with the Secretary of State. The training occurs today (07.15) and tomorrow (07.16) so county staff are partaking in these trainings. The County has not had a VAAC meeting since the state-wide VAAC last met, so there is no update from the County's VAAC. Aaron also stated that engagement at local LAACs and VAACs is something many counties struggle with and that is concern that counties frequently relay to the CACEO Voters with Specific Needs committee. Aaron suggested that perhaps this concern is something the statewide VAAC can address via a prospective working group.

6. Secretary of State Updates

Voting Systems Testing (OVSTA)

- **Debra Ledsinger**

- Hart Verity 3.2.2 is currently in post-testing.
- Elections Systems and Software (ES&S) has the EVS 6.5.2.0 voting system in pre-testing.
- Democracy Live has its Secure Select 126 in pre-testing.
- Smartmatic has given the Secretary of State its application for its VSR 1.2.1 system. Debra confirmed that Smartmatic's application is a new application that it has submitted for review.

Voter's Choice Act (VCA)

- **Joshua Robinson**

- The VCA Task Force is finishing its 2025 state-wide special election report. The Secretary of State recently submitted to the legislature the

supplement on race and ethnicity. The VCA Task Force is working on its portion for that data analysis. The VCA Task Force will then work on the section related to voter experience after the CSU Sacramento report is finalized which the Secretary of State expects to occur approximately within the next month. After that report is complete, it will be posted to the Secretary of State's website. Joshua stated that he will send this report to committee staff for distribution to the rest of the committee. The test VCA Task Force meeting will be held on July 30, 2026, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Legislation

- **Paige Kent**

- Senate Bill 1164 has passed in the Senate, and the Appropriations Committee of the Assembly is now reviewing it. Paige stated that the goal of this bill is to replace the existing California Voting Rights Act. The Bill intends to broaden the existing Act and enshrine provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965. Its goals include prohibiting vote dilution, voter suppression, and other forms of voter discrimination. The Bill has been amended a few times. The most recent amendment occurred on July 2, 2026.
- Senate Bill 1420 has passed in the Senate and has been referred to the Appropriations Committee of the Assembly. The bill pertains to vote-by-mail ballots and early voting. The bill proposed to add a provision to the Election Code requiring the Secretary of State to establish regulations regarding procedures for in-person voting. The bill would also add more provisions to the requirements of the Voter Information Guide which would provide more information to voters prior to an election. The most recent amendment occurred on June 18, 2026.
- Assembly Bill 2604 is with the Appropriations Committee of the Senate as of June 30, 2026. This bill pertains to ballot curing. It would add a provision to Elections Code that would allow voters to access electronic signature curing following their vote.

Establishment of Working Groups

- **Veronica Elsea:** The committee is updating how it exercises its working groups to ensure that it complies with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act. Veronica clarified that the committee must decide whether its new working groups will consist of 3 or more members—which would require the work group to comply with the provisions of the Bagley Keene Act (e.g., provide 10-day notice of meeting, post agendas)—or 2 members—which would allow the working group to meet without the requirement to comply with Bagley Keene Act requirements. Veronica summarized the benefits and drawbacks of both options that were addressed during the previous VAAC meeting. A working group with 3 or more members means that there are more individuals working on issues pertaining to the working group. However, the working group would be less flexible in terms of

when it can meet. A work group with 2 members means that the working group has more flexibility in terms of when it can meet but has fewer individuals working on issues pertaining to the committee. A committee with 2 members also means that it runs the risk of having only 1 member do all the work if the other member is absent or can no longer participate in the working group.

Motion put forth by Fred Nisen to limit working groups to 2 members; seconded by Armando Salud-Ambriz.

- **Fred Nisen:** The benefits of having two people in the working groups far outweigh the benefits of three or more. In the past, information and documents pertaining to the committee were circulated back and forth between the members. If the working group has more than two members, it would be less productive because the information and documents would have to be provided to the public and, as a result, members would have to take time to draft and edit the documents in the meeting.
- **Veronica Elsea:** Veronica stated that if the committee agrees to limit working groups to 2 members, the members should maintain close lines of communication with committee staff if one of the members habitually misses working group meetings and generally does not participate in the working group.

Vote:

Yea: Fred Nisen, Veronica Elsea, Armando Salud-Ambriz, Veronica Langworthy, Roxana Castro, Rebecca Donabed, Mike Nguyen

Abstain: Aaron Nevarez

Motion carried.

- **Veronica Elsea:** She stated that the committee now must establish the working groups. She summarized some of the working groups that committee members have expressed interest in. *Petitions and Signature Verifications:* The previous VAAC had a working group on petitions and signature verification. This topic generally concerns the requirement to have a witness present if a voter cannot sign a petition or referendum under their own volition and the reality that this requirement creates an accessibility issue for individuals unable to complete their own signature. *Poll Work Training Standards:* This working group would review poll worker training standards and determine whether the working group could develop recommendations to enhance or refine these standards and render the training more uniform across counties. *Data Driven Concerns and Solutions:* This committee would look at statistics related to the participation of people with disabilities in the election process and barriers to participation, including in the vote-by-mail process.
- Veronica also stated that committee members have also suggested developing working groups related to website accessibility and county engagement with local VAACs. Regarding the latter suggestion, Veronica recalled that the committee started a working group on this topic two terms ago. She recalled that the working group had written suggestions for the counties. However, the Secretary

of State told the committee group in its advisory capacity could not make suggestions directly to counties. So, the prospective working group would have to work around this reality.

- **Fred Nisen:** Regarding the working group on county engagement with local VAACs, he stated that it could be a good idea to have this working group focus specifically on recruiting and maintaining VAAC members.
- **Aaron Nevarez:** Aaron reiterated that the working group could address strategies, best practices, and other relevant information that makes VAAC engagement at certain counties more fruitful than engagement at other counties. He stated that VAAC engagement is a concern that several counties have expressed to him.
- **Veronica Elsea:** Regarding the Petitions and Signature Verifications working group, Veronica stated that during the previous term, members spoke with the Secretary of State and determined that the answer to fixing the problems identified through this working group is the passage of new legislation. When the term ended, the working group had determined that the Secretary of State can nudge the Legislature to develop this legislation. The working group was determining what specifically the Secretary of State could do to nudge the Legislature to develop this legislation. The work group also realized that it would have to help make this legislation itself.
- **Ryan Reece:** He clarified that the Secretary of State updates the poll worker training standards every election cycle. He stated that the Secretary of State is open to receiving recommendations from the committee regarding these standards.
- **Aaron Nevarez:** He reminded the committee that counties are distinct: they have their own voting systems, different technologies, and other unique aspects. As a result, the committee should ensure that it has a clear understanding of what it intends to render “consistent” in poll worker training.
- **Veronica Langworthy:** Regarding a working group on data-driven concerns and solutions, Veronica explained that there is a wealth of reports about accessibility issues where people’s votes have been rejected. This committee would work with extant data and determine how the issues identified in the data can be resolved.
 - The committee generally raised concerns about the quality of the data available for this working group.

Motion put forth by Veronica Elsea to establish a working group on Petitions and Signature Verifications; seconded by Rebecca Donabed.

Vote:

Yea: Fred Nisen, Veronica Elsea, Armando Salud-Ambriz, Veronica Langworthy, Roxana Castro, Aaron Nevarez, Rebecca Donabed, Mike Nguyen
Motion carried.

Motion put forth by Rebecca Donabed to establish a working group to help local VAACs engage with their respective counties and recruit and retain members; seconded by Fred Nisen.

Vote:

Yea: Fred Nisen, Veronica Elsea, Armando Salud-Ambriz, Veronica Langworthy, Roxana Castro, Aaron Nevarez, Rebecca Donabed, Mike Nguyen
Motion carried.

Motion put forth by Rebecca Donabed to establish a working group on poll worker standard training; seconded by Fred Nisen.

Vote:

Yea: Fred Nisen, Veronica Elsea, Veronica Langworthy, Rebecca Donabed

Abstain: Armando Salud-Ambriz, Aaron Nevarez, Roxana Castro, Mike Nguyen

Motion failed.

The committee agreed to not assign members to the working groups until the committee finalizes all the working groups during the next VAAC meeting.

7. June 2, 2026, Primary Election Report

The committee did not have sufficient time to address the report.

8. Future Agenda Items

The committee agreed that it would complete the discussion on working groups, vote to establish the working groups, and assign members to each group during the next VAAC meeting. The committee also agreed to discuss the June 2 Primary Election Report.

9. Adjournment

ACTION ITEMS

- SOS staff to post to the VAAC webpage the finalized meeting minutes from February 25, 2026, meeting.
- SOS staff to post to the VAAC webpage the finalized meeting minutes from May 27, 2026, meeting. SOS staff to ensure that that the spelling of Roxana Castro's name is correct.
- SOS staff to send to VAAC members the links to all the bills on which SOS staff updated the members during this meeting.