

**California Secretary of State
Voter's Choice Task Force**

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 19, 2026, | 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

1. Welcome, Call to Order: 2:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Task Force Members Present: Chair Donna Linder, Melvin E. Levey, Evelyn Mendez, Matt Moreles, Gabriel Taylor, Leslie Hernandez, Dora Rose, Camila Chavez, Jesse Salinas, Chair Petrina Branch, Brittany Stonesifer.

Non-Voting Members Present: Ethan Jones, Carrie Cornwell (joined later in the meeting)

Absent: Deanna Kitamura, Art Tinoco, Bob Page, Ellen Nash, Dean Logan

Declaration of Quorum

Chair Petrina Branch declared a quorum was reached.

2. Comments: General Public Items Not on the Agenda

Chair Petrina Branch invited public comments. The following comments were made:

No public comments.

3. Discussion and Possible Action: Task Force Meeting Minutes of Feb. 5, 2026

Recommendation for Action: Staff recommend the Task Force adopt the minutes of the meeting of Feb. 5, 2026.

In a motion by Petrina Branch and carried on a 10-0 vote, Task Force members approved the minutes.

AYES: Chair Donna Linder, Melvin E. Levey, Evelyn Mendez, Matt Moreles, Gabriel Taylor, Leslie Hernandez, Dora Rose, Camila Chavez, Jesse Salinas, Chair Petrina Branch.

NOES: None

ABSENT: Deanna Kitamura, Art Tinoco, Bob Page, Ellen Nash, Dean Logan

ABSTAIN: None

4. Purpose & History of the VCA Subcommittee

Sharing of the draft document prepared by Donna Linder and Deanna Kitamura.

- Dora Rose asked a process question – can feedback be given after today, or must all feedback be received during this meeting?
 - SOS VCA Manager Josh Robinson clarified that feedback and comments can be received afterward, in fact Bob Page has already shared some. But the hope is to receive feedback during the meeting today.
 - Donna Linder asked if comments need to be emailed to SOS and then forwarded to the subcommittee, or if comments can be directly sent to the subcommittee. SOS Robinson will figure out that answer.
- In the chat, Dora Rose suggested a public-view Google doc for feedback and edits.
 - SOS will clarify if that's an option.
 - Donna Linder noted in chat that her county system blocks Google Docs.

Feedback on the document

- Dora Rose noted that it doesn't outline all of the steps required for an EAP, such as all the public input; nor does it reflect the changes from SB 1450, such as adding a Voter Outreach Committee to larger counties.
 - This can function as “evergreen-type” material that introduces VCA before going into specificities for this election.
- Jesse Salinas asked if we are looking at all elections, or just the most recent one? Might be worth reviewing legislation that set up this task force and specify that in this report.
- Matt Morales notes that we do not need to reprint the bill with all the detail, but we can still provide a robust overview that can be used in future reports.
- Matt Morales: “According to the legislative analysis” paragraph claims the purpose of VCA is to increase voter participation. Morales notes that counties have other considerations for adopting it as well, such as increasing community input in how elections are run and expansion of drop boxes. We should consider adding a couple of sentences that incorporate these additional motivators.
 - Gabriel Taylor agrees, emphasizing the role of increased community involvement.
 - Donna Linder notes that this document reflects the bill author's intention – we can certainly add more about why counties are moving to VCA beyond the author's intention.
 - Jesse Salinas noted that there's a difference between the “whats” of VCA elections and the “whys” – are we trying to tell the story of how we got to where we are now, or a snapshot in time of what the situation is now?

- Matt Morales notes this is the section that sets the context, so it is appropriate to establish the story of VCA: the legislature's stated intent, as well as the other "whys" of counties adopting the model subsequently.
- Brittany Stonesifer noted the role of Board of Supervisors approval, and how VCA was discussed in those meetings (though Donna Linder noted that elected ROVs do not need that approval).
- Ethan Jones notes that while increasing voter participation was the main driver of VCA, the legislative record also notes other motivators. Instead of relying on memory, folks can revisit that source to flesh out this section.
- Leslie Hernandez noted that we ought to include the names of the original bill's authors, sponsors, and that Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law.
- Ethan Jones: two clarifications:
 - 1st paragraph end: 29 counties instead of 30 used the VCA model for 2025 Special.
 - Middle 1st paragraph: clarify that all counties started to do VBM starting in 2020.

5. Public Comment on the Purpose & History of the VCA

Chair Petrina Branch welcomed comments from the public:

- Rhonda Provost reminds the Task Force that they are seeing VCA from an administration perspective, versus she's seeing a different perspective. She does not see the goal achieved of increasing voter participation in implementing VCA, nor is the ballot mentioned.

6. Future Agenda Items and Other Comments: Task Force Members

Next meeting set for Mar. 5, 2026 from 2:00-3:30 p.m.

- Topic: Unusual Nature of the Special Election
- Subcommittee members: Gabriel Taylor & Dora Rose
- Mel Levey suggested we can start the meeting with a final review/wrap-up of Section 1 before moving on to Section 2.
- Public comment from Rhonda Provost asked if the public can have a copy of the draft document that gets reviewed in the meeting. Josh Robinson noted that yes, it will be uploaded to the VCA website.

7. Adjournment

Chair Petrina Branch adjourned the meeting at 2:51 p.m.