
REBECCA SPENCER
Registrar of Voters



ART TINOCO
Assistant Registrar of Voters

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)
Meeting Minutes
January 26, 2023 | 10:00 a.m.

Members:

Gabriel Taylor, Committee Member

Guests:

Ronak Patel, Chief Deputy County Counsel, Riverside County

Registrar of Voters Staff:

Rebecca Spencer, Registrar of Voters
Art Tinoco, Assistant Registrar of Voters
Alma Del Carmen, Administrative Services Analyst I
Patrick Munar, Senior Public Information Specialist
Miguel Borquez, Elections Technician II
Juan Figueroa, Elections Technician II

Meeting Commenced at 10:00 a.m.

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I. Welcome/Introductions

Introductions were made of the following staff: Registrar of Voters Rebecca Spencer, Assistant Registrar Art Tinoco, and Registrar of Voters staff members. Following staff introductions, attendees of the meeting made introductions.

II. Approval of September 29, 2022 VAAC Minutes

Gabriel Taylor requested that the approval of the minutes be deferred to the next VAAC meeting, when more VAAC members are present. Art Tinoco and Rebecca Spencer approved Mr. Taylor's request to defer the approval of the September 29, 2022 VAAC minutes to the next VAAC meeting.

III. Recap of the November 2022 Consolidated General Election:

Art Tinoco shared that Riverside County had a total of approximately 1.3 million registered voters that were mailed out an official ballot under the Voter's Choice Act. There were state and local election contests on the ballot. The ballot was a 2-card ballot for most of the county with 163 contests, 379 qualified candidates, and 437 different ballot types. There was only one jurisdiction, City of Palm Desert City Council District 2, that contracted with the Registrar of Voters office to conduct their election using Ranked Choice Voting. That type of ballot did go on a third card. This is the first time that Riverside County has conducted this type of election.

Mr. Tinoco shared that there was a total of 145 Vote Center locations. All 145 Vote Centers were open for 4 days and, of those 145 Vote Centers, 26 Vote Centers were open for 11 days. For these sites, the Registrar of Voters office has primarily been using government buildings, such as county libraries and community centers. Approximately 350 temporary employees were hired to assist at the 145 sites. These temporary employees attended a month academy to become Leads at these sites.

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In addition, the Registrar of Voters office hired approximately 1500 community paid volunteers to work at the 145 Vote Centers. Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act mandates that the Registrar of Voters office hire individuals who are bilingual in the Spanish language. 336 paid volunteers that speak Spanish were hired to assist limited English proficiency voters at the Vote Centers. The state also mandates the Registrar of Voters office, in certain parts of the county where there is three percent or more voters registered for a specific language, to hire bilingual volunteers to assist in those languages. As such, the Registrar of Voters office hired a diverse number of bilingual volunteers to make the November 2022 election successful: 38 Tagalog, 12 Vietnamese, 14 Korean, 14 Chinese Mandarin/Cantonese language hired volunteers.

Mr. Tinoco shared that there were 87 vote-by-mail drop off locations throughout Riverside County, 28 of which were at city clerk locations. The remaining vote-by-mail drop off locations were at non-city clerk facilities, mainly government buildings. All vote-by-mail drop off locations opened 29 days before the November 8th election to allow voters to drop off their ballots early. In addition, there were two secured drop off boxes located at the Registrar of Voters office.

Total votes cast for this election were approximately 604 thousand plus, equating to approximately 46% voter turnout. The Registrar of Voters office anticipates that the 2024 Presidential General Election will see double that amount for voter turnout. As the 2024 election cycle approaches, the Registrar of Voters office will share information at upcoming VAAC meetings.

The Registrar of Voters office certified the election on December 1, 2022. All processes were successfully completed during the canvas period.

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A. Discussion of November 2022 Voter Totals: Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail Ballots (RAVBM), Emergency Medical Ballot & Curbside Requests

Mr. Tinoco shared that there were 152 voters that used Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail Ballots (RAVBM). Only 1 voter requested an Emergency Medical Ballot. At the Vote Centers, 24 voters requested curbside assistance and 184 voters were assisted voters.

Mr. Taylor shared that these numbers speak to the strength of all the procedures the Riverside County Registrar of Voters office has put in place, with its helpfulness and importance to voters. Mr. Tinoco agreed, sharing that this was the first election a phone number was listed on the signage at every Vote Center to assist voters who needed curbside assistance. The increased number of voters requesting curbside assistance shows that it is becoming more popular.

B. Vote Center Accessibility – Comments from Committee Members

Mr. Taylor did not have any comments to share regarding Vote Center accessibility. Mr. Taylor and his organization, Disability Rights California, did not receive calls on their hotline regarding any significant issues from voters in Riverside. Mr. Tinoco shared that most of the comments the Registrar of Voters office received were related to the procedures of processing voters, not accessibility.

Mr. Taylor asked if there were any notes that identified the type of issues the 184 assisted voters needed assistance on at Vote Centers. Mr. Tinoco responded that the roster, "List of Assisted Voters," is setup to identify the person requesting assistance but not the issue they are requesting assistance for. That information is not tracked. Mr. Tinoco will confirm and follow up with Mr. Taylor.

Rebecca Spencer suggested that item B (Vote Center Accessibility-Comments from Committee Members) be added to the next VAAC meeting

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agenda to see if there are more accessibility comments from the November 2022 election. Mr. Taylor agreed and requested that items B, C, and D be deferred to the next meeting, so that more participants can chime in. Mr. Tinoco also agreed to this request.

C. Ballot Marking Device (BMD) – Related Issues from Voters with Disabilities – Comments from Committee Members

Mr. Taylor shared that he did not receive any major reports regarding BMD issues. Mr. Tinoco repeated that this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

D. Success Stories

Mr. Tinoco shared that one of the Registrar of Voters success stories of 2022 would be the successful implementation of Ranked Choice Voting for Palm Desert City Council District 2. The City of Palm Desert did facilitate the training and voter education on Ranked Choice Voting for the voters in district 2. The Registrar of Voters office assembled the instructions on how to properly mark the ballot by ranking candidates rather than selecting candidates by filling in the bubble next to the candidates' name.

IV. SB 1480 Survey Feedback Report

Mr. Taylor shared that Senate Bill 1480 (SB 1480) was the proposed legislation by Disability Rights California to initiate an electronic ballot return option for voters with print disabilities. It is a way to mark, complete, and submit a ballot electronically via a secure portal on the county elections website. The idea was to create a secure and accessible option for voters who may not be able to complete the final steps of the voting process privately and independently. Many voters may be able to do the first steps of reviewing the ballot and marking their selections, and maybe even printing it out. However, the last step of putting the ballot in an envelope and dropping it in a mailbox, or returning it in-person at a Vote Center, is not something they can do on their own. SB 1480 was assembled, heard

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by the State Senate side, had gone through all the committees, and was then approved by the State Senate. SB 1480 was in the process of being transferred to the Assembly side. A few days before being heard by the first committee on the Assembly side, Secretary of State Weber submitted a letter voicing her concerns, hesitations, and reservations on the legislation. The legislation was axed and did not go to the Assembly side.

Mr. Taylor shared that Disability Rights California has regrouped and assembled a survey. Disability Rights California posted the survey on their website and emailed it to many of their community partners and advocates to get feedback on barriers that are encountered in the voting process and typical issues encountered when trying to complete their ballot. Disability Rights California is trying to get feedback on whether SB 1480 would be a helpful option for voters to have. There were 54 respondents to the survey. 34 of them identified as being a voter with a disability, and a greater percentage of them were voters with print disabilities, of blind or low vision, or they had manual dexterity disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, that made the ballot marking process a bit harder for them to do independently. Disability Rights California is still in the process of analyzing the data and will be sharing it publicly once it is finalized. Mr. Taylor shared that it shows that there is a need and desire to have an option like SB 1480. Mr. Taylor shared that people he talked to, from organizations like United Cerebral Palsy and the National Federation of the Blind, were encouraged by this proposed legislation to give them an option that would create a private and independent voting experience. Mr. Taylor will keep the VAAC Committee updated as new developments come up.

Mr. Tinoco thanked Mr. Taylor for the information and shared that he read the SB 1480 bill as well, and that it would permit the Secretary of State to certify this type of remote accessible system, and then develop procedures for a voter using this system.

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V. 2023 County Election Schedule

Mr. Tinoco shared that, unless there are any type of special elections at the state or local level, odd years are rather slow for the Riverside County Registrar of Voters office. Riverside County does have two scheduled elections.

The first scheduled election is the August 29, 2023 General District Uniform Election (UDEL) with a few landowner districts that may potentially be going. The Registrar of Voters office is waiting for the nomination period to open and confirm if there are any candidates that wish to run for the various districts. The three districts that may potentially have a contest are Fern Valley Water District, High Valley Water District, and Temescal Valley Water District. However, if there are not enough candidates that file during the nomination period for any of these districts, then the districts will most likely appoint in lieu of election.

There is also a November 7, 2023 Consolidated UDEL Election, covering community service districts and county water districts. For community service districts, on calendar is the De Luz Community Service District and Southern Coachella Valley Community Service District. For county water districts, on calendar is the Cabazon County Water District, Chiriaco Summit County Water District, and Pinyon Pines County Water District. In previous odd year November elections, a lot of cities and other jurisdictions went to election, but many of them moved their elections to the even years. As such, there are not as many on calendar for November 2023. Mr. Tinoco stated that all contests for the November 7th election depend on the nomination period. If there is not a sufficient number of candidates that wish to file for these offices, then the districts will most likely appoint in lieu of election.

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VI. Additional Discussion and/or Announcements from Committee Members

Mr. Taylor requested that many discussion items on today's agenda be placed on the next agenda when more people can comment and provide feedback. Mr. Tinoco agreed to Mr. Taylor's request.

Mr. Tinoco shared that in 2023 the Registrar of Voters office will be working on updating the county's Election Administration Plan for the Voters Choice Act. All Registrar of Voters offices conducting elections under the Voter's Choice Act are required to update the Election Administration Plan every two years. The Secretary of State has been meeting with the Registrar of Voters office to discuss time frames and the Secretary of State wants the Election Administration Plan updated prior to 2024. More updates will be shared on this item at future VAAC meetings and updates will be provided via email, public notices, public hearings for the Election Administration Plan and voter education workshops that will be taking place this year.

Mr. Tinoco shared that the Registrar of Voters office will also be heavily involved in conducting Vote Center and ballot drop off site surveys for all locations that have been used in Riverside County. The Registrar of Voters office will continue updating the VAAC Committee and community members on ongoing projects that are happening in preparation for the 2024 primary and general elections.

VII. Comments from the Public

No comments from the public.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 27, 2023.