



LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

DEAN C. LOGAN

Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments
State of California – Oversight Hearing

California Voter's Choice Act
Monday, December 18, 2023

TESTIMONY: County Election Officials

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Los Angeles County

Good afternoon, Chair Glazer, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing today on such a timely and important topic. I am Dean Logan, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk for Los Angeles County.

As articulated in the Hearing Background and in the opening testimony this afternoon, through the passage and implementation of the Voter's Choice Act, California has established a strong foundation to support free and fair elections, to encourage and facilitate voter participation, and to support a voter-centered approach to when, where, and how voting occurs in our state.

As I am sure you are aware; the nature, integrity, and structure of our electoral process are under tremendous scrutiny as we navigate political discourse, respond to the continuing aftereffects of a global pandemic, secure against cyber-attacks, respond to mis/dis and mal information, and embrace the changing needs of our electorate.

The expectations placed upon election administrators are more visible and demanding than at any time in recent history – and the threats against the profession, more present. That said, we believe it is the strength of the statutory foundation established by this legislative body that ensures our ability to focus efforts and resources on programs and activities that provide access to voting for all who are eligible in California.

We know – and the data shows – that structure and policy alone will not bridge the gaps between rates of registration and participation – nor will it, on its own, ensure voter turnout mirrors the demographic profile of our electorate. Voter participation stems from intrinsic motivation influenced by more than the time, place, and equipment used for voting. It relies on civic education, trusted messengers, partnerships with advocacy organizations, transparency, and consistency – and, it is eroded by cynicism, lack of access, confusion, and controversy.

Our role, as election administrators, is to ensure that once that motivation is achieved, there are no barriers to participation and that we deliver a voting experience that conveys the significance and power of the vote. The Voter's Choice Act has strengthened our ability to do that.

Los Angeles County is the largest and most diverse election jurisdiction in the country with over 10 million residents, and 5.6 million registered voters, from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, and communities. We serve an electorate with large populations of non-or limited-English speakers, voters with disabilities, and communities in large, dense urban centers as well as those in rural, geographically isolated areas.

Over a decade ago, we embarked on an unprecedented effort to design, engineer, manufacture, and implement the first publicly owned voting system in the United States; an initiative we identified as Voting Solutions for All People. Through that effort, we reimaged the voting experience, transformed the commercial voting systems market, and expanded the regulatory environment by setting a new standard for voting system design that prioritizes usability, security, and accessibility.

Los Angeles County introduced its new voting model and implemented the Voter's Choice Act during the 2020 statewide election cycle. Responsive to the COVID-19 public health crises, the model was adjusted between the Primary and General Elections and the November 2020 election marked the first in which all voters in Los Angeles County were mailed ballots and had the option of voting in-person at any Vote Center located in the County.

Most voters in Los Angeles County today vote using a Vote by Mail ballot, but how they interact with that resource differs across demographics, so the need for options and customization is critically important. The availability of secure ballot drop boxes, ballot tracking tools, and signature verification applications are examples.

Under provisions of the Voter's Choice Act, we offer in-person Vote Centers starting ten days prior and leading up to Election Day. Voters can vote at any location and access a broad range of accessible services that offer an independent, secure, and private voting experience – and customizable language assistance through our audio ballot and multi-lingual ballot display options.

Of note, in statewide elections, Los Angeles County has consistently established Vote Centers in numbers well above the minimum required under the Voter's Choice Act formula. This is directly responsive to the criteria outlined in the VCA for ensuring equitable placement and geographic distribution throughout the County.

We also operate Mobile Vote Centers and Flex Vote Centers to complement traditional voting locations. Mobile Vote Centers are deployed to high-traffic locations, such as sporting events, community festivals, college campuses, and employment centers. Flex Vote Centers are used to bring voting services to historically underserved or underrepresented communities such as language minorities, justice-involved individuals, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, voters with disabilities, and geographically isolated voters. Our

Mobile and Flex Vote Centers rely on community partners to identify and serve these communities.

A key contributor to effective administration of elections under the Voter's Choice Act is the interaction we have with our stakeholder community. Through our long-established Community Voter Outreach Committee, our Language Accessibility Advisory Committee, and our Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee, we have formed partnerships that assist in the selection vote centers, voter education, election monitoring, and early identification of any issues that may disrupt the voting process.

Overall, our experience has been that the Voter's Choice Act offers a more flexible, voter-focused model of voting; one that is responsive to voters. It allows us to focus limited resources on services for voters who are less likely to have familiarity with the voting process and who are less likely to participate. It also allows for broader application of other legislative initiatives such as Conditional Voter Registration, accessible services, minority language support, and services for military and overseas voters.

Following the 2024 election cycle, a more complete set of data will exist upon which to consider changes or enhancements to the Voter's Choice Act. Some of those considerations may include changes to the formulas for establishing the minimum number of Vote Centers, or the number of locations required during the 10-day period before Election Day and those that open the weekend before.

In analyzing that data, we believe it will be important to recognize that, in comparison to the traditional single day, precinct-based model of voting, the VCA experience is still relatively new. It is reasonable to assume that, despite outreach and education efforts, many voters may not be aware of all the options available to them for voting. For that reason, we recommend caution in making sweeping changes to the model too soon.

Today, our voting systems in Los Angeles County are comprehensive, scalable, and component-based covering all elements of the voting and vote counting process – but maintaining those systems and supporting the associated services requires consistent, ongoing, and reliable funding. The infusion of state and federal funding in 2020 and 2022 helped significantly with visibility, accessibility, and security; however, the loss of that funding leading into the 2024 election cycle puts at risk the successes achieved by the policy and structural foundation established by this legislative body.

As elections administrators, we are entrusted to facilitate voters' access and ability to cast a vote and to have confidence in that vote's impact, but the process, outcomes, and legitimacy of elections do not belong to us, rather they belong to the voters for whom those systems give voice, influence, and power. We must never lose sight of that.

Thank you, again, for holding this hearing and for raising awareness around the impact and sustainability of the Voter's Choice Act.

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