



M E M O R A N D U M
COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER-REGISTRAR OF VOTERS
Clerk-Recorder Office
County of Placer

TO: Board of Supervisors DATE: June 13, 2023
FROM: Ryan Ronco, County Clerk-Recorder-Registrar of Voters
BY: Stephen Aye
SUBJECT: Voter's Choice Act Implementation

ACTION REQUESTED

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Placer County Elections Office to implement the requirements of the California Voter's Choice Act (VCA), including development and submission of an Elections Administration Plan and a Voter Education and Outreach Plan to the Secretary of State for final approval, allowing the County to transition to a Vote Center model under SB 450.

BACKGROUND

In 2016, the State of California passed the California Voter's Choice Act (VCA), Senate Bill 450 (SB450), allowing specific counties on or after January 1, 2018, to conduct elections by vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot while also providing regional Vote Centers to be open 10 days prior to Election Day through close of voting on Election Day. In June 2018, there were five (5) VCA pilot counties that implemented the Voter's Choice Act for the 2018 elections - Madera, Napa, Nevada, Sacramento, and San Mateo. In March 2020, ten (10) additional counties implemented VCA - Amador, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Mariposa, Orange, Santa Clara, and Tuolumne. In 2022, twelve (12) additional counties adopted VCA – Alameda, Kings, Marin, Merced, Riverside, San Benito, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Ventura, and Yolo. Several others are in various stages of adopting or implementing VCA at this time. On or after January 1, 2020, the bill authorizes any county except Los Angeles, to conduct any election as an all-mailed ballot election if certain conditions are satisfied, including conditions related to ballot drop off locations, vote centers, and plans for the administration of all mailed ballot elections.

On May 8, 2020, and June 3, 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 health emergencies, the Governor of California issued Executive Orders N-64-20 and N-67-20. The orders required that every eligible voter receive a ballot in the mail and that local election offices provide regional in-person vote centers for the November 3, 2020, General Election, which allowed counties that were not VCA counties to conduct a VCA-Like voting model. As described in former Elections Code Section 1602 (repealed on January 1, 2022), the VCA-Like model included having one (1) in-person voting location for every 10,000 voters and one (1) ballot drop box for every 15,000 voters. Pursuant to the Executive Orders, the Placer County Elections Office successfully conducted a VCA-Like election for the November 3, 2020 General Election.

On September 27, 2021, the California Governor signed Assembly Bill 37 (AB37) which extends the requirements for all local elections officials to mail a vote-by-mail ballot to every registered voter. The bill requires county elections officials to permit any voter to cast a ballot using a certified remote accessible vote-by-mail (RAVBM) system for any election. AB37 requires a vote-by-mail tracking system to be accessible to voters with disabilities.

Requirements under the VCA (Elections Code Section 4005) include:

- One vote center for every 50,000 voters open 10 days before the day of the election
- One vote center for every 10,000 voters open 3 days before day of the election

- At least one Official Ballot Drop Box for every 15,000 voters open during regular business hours starting 29 days before the day of the election, with at least one location accessible a minimum of 12 hours per day
- Formation of a Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) and a Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) to provide community input into VCA implementation.
- Creation of an Election Administration Plan and a Voter Education and Outreach Plan, subject to public comment and hearing, including at a minimum two direct contacts with voters, a voter assistance hotline, and direct outreach in the Vote-by-mail ballot packet

Features of this VCA model for Placer County includes:

- Any voter in the County can go to any vote center
- A total of at least 29 vote centers countywide, reaching all voting communities instead of having up to 300+ assigned polling places
- Of the 29 vote centers, a total of 8 vote centers will be open as early as 10 days before the election
- The Saturday before Election Day, all 29 vote centers will be open.
- At least 24 Drop boxes open for 29 days before the election
- All registered voters will automatically be mailed a vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot with prepaid return postage, 28 days before Election Day
- Voters can vote-by-mail or at any vote center in Placer County
- Vote centers are an extension of voting services offered at the Elections Office
- Formation of a Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) and a Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) to provide community input into VCA implementation. Placer County established a VAAC over a decade ago; the LAAC will be established.

The Elections Office would like to implement the VCA. Key elements of this model include, implementing regional vote centers throughout Placer County for multiple days as opposed to traditional polling places open only on Election Day. Currently over 80 percent of all registered votes are cast either through the mail or dropped off in a drop box. Vote centers are similar to traditional polling places but will provide greater flexibility and convenience for voters due to being open for more days and allowing any registered voter to cast a ballot at any vote center.

At this time, Sacramento County, Nevada County, and El Dorado County are all participating in VCA in our region.

Currently all active registered voters in Placer County receive a vote-by-mail ballot. Placer County has already established 24 drop box locations throughout the County. Those are two of the primary requirements of VCA. The only significant change will be the implementation of regional vote centers in place of traditional polling places. The number of vote centers will be determined by the number of registered voters on the 88th day before an election. As specified in the VCA, at least 8 vote centers would be open starting ten days prior to Election Day with the remainder being open starting three days prior to the Election Day.

Vote center locations will be selected based on specific statutory criteria, such as population centers, parking, access to public transportation, rate of vote-by-mail usage, minority language communities, and proximity to low-income communities. Locations will also be evaluated based on size, availability, accessibility, and security.

Implementing the VCA will result in any registered voter in Placer County being able to receive and/or return the appropriate ballot for their precinct at any regional vote center. The VCA will

reduce the number of voting machines needed throughout the county by more than half the current amount.

The Elections Office will work with community members and through open comment periods and specific meetings prior to submitting their final Election Administration Plan to ensure public input on Vote Center locations, language requirements, outreach plans, etc. The draft plan and subsequent versions of the Election Administration Plan will be posted on the Election Office's website.

FISCAL IMPACT

Anticipated initial General Fund one-time expenses are estimated at approximately \$550,000 for equipment, voter outreach, and education. In addition, ongoing expenses will be approximately \$50,000 per election. If today's actions are approved, the department will return to your board for the necessary capital asset purchase authorizations and any necessary budget amendments.

ATTACHMENT

Resolution

Before the Board of Supervisors County of Placer, State of California

In the matter of:

A Resolution Authorizing the Elections Office
To Implement the Voters Choice Act

Resolution No.: _____

The following Resolution was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer
at a regular meeting held on _____, by the following vote:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage.

Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attest:

Clerk of said Board

WHEREAS, the State of California enacted SB 450, the California Voter's Choice Act (VCA) in 2016, allowing for the establishment of Vote Centers and authorizing elections to be conducted as all vote-by-mail elections; and,

WHEREAS, the VCA requires community involvement, input, and consideration of specified demographic data when establishing Vote Centers; and,

WHEREAS, the number of Vote Centers is to be tied to current voter registration figures, increasing as the registration increases; and,

WHEREAS, Vote Centers will be equipped with secure, interactive voter registration files for immediate verification of voting activity; and,

WHEREAS, voters will be able to register to vote and receive a ballot at any Vote Center within the County of Placer, increasing voter participation; and,

WHEREAS, voters will be able to vote at any Vote Center during the 11-day voting period, providing voters the freedom from having to vote at an assigned voting location on one day; and,

WHEREAS, Vote Centers will offer multiple accessible ballot marking devices for use by any voter, over 11 days during each election; and,

WHEREAS, the number of registered voters in the County who choose to register as vote-by-mail voters has consistently increased and is reflected in the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election voter registration totals, with more than 80% of the voters being registered to vote by mail; and,

WHEREAS, the number of ballots cast using a vote-by-mail ballot continues to increase while the number of in-person voting continues to decrease; and,

WHEREAS, one of the responses to the COVID-19 health emergencies includes the California Governor's Executive Order N-64 of May of 2020 and Executive Order N-67-20 of June of 2020, requiring elections officials to send every eligible voter a ballot in the mail and provide regional in-person vote centers for the November 3, 2020 General Election; and,

WHEREAS, counties that were not a VCA county, were allowed to conduct their elections using model similar to the VCA model for the November 3, 2020, General Election; and,

WHEREAS, the County of Placer successfully conducted the November 3, 2020, General Election using a model similar to the VCA model.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer, as follows:

1. The findings stated in the recitals to this Resolution are restated in full and adopted by reference.
2. The Board of Supervisors hereby authorizes Vote Center elections in the County of Placer provided the Registrar of Voters satisfies the requirements of and obtains the approval from the Secretary of State as required by SB 450.
3. The Registrar of Voters is authorized and directed to implement all required activities outlined in the California Voter's Choice Act ("Act") of 2016, once the Registrar of Voters satisfies the requirements of, and obtains the approval from the Secretary of State as required by, SB 450, including those that may be added by amendment to said Act.

