

MINUTES OF THE NEVADA COUNTY ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Language Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting

10:30 A.M. Tuesday, August 29, 2017
Providence Mine Rooms
Rood Center
250 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City, California

Language Accessibility

AGENDA

A. INTRODUCTIONS / OTHER VOICES

Staff: Greg Diaz, Janice Gosalvez, Teal Caddy, Kristin Kopec, Kristian Hamilton

Teresa Crimmens, Yami Gutierrez, Caroline Fragoso, Alex Keeble-Toll, Kelsey Westfall, David Briggs, Christie Gillison, Judy Price, Bob Branstrom, James Schwab, Jo Ann Rebane, Joey Jordan, Dora Rose, Camille Hald, Mary Ann Townsend, Janice Bedayn

Copies of SB450/VCA flyer and agendas were provided to attendees.

Due to the circumstances of the meeting we were not able to identify all of the attendees who spoke at the meeting; therefore, all speakers will be identified as "attendee" herein after.

B. VOTER'S CHOICE ACT (VCA) OVERVIEW

Presented by Janice Gosalvez

Janice introduced the VCA with a slideshow presentation

1. The VCA is all about modernizing the voting experience. It's going to be all VBM ballots. You are no longer limited to your specific polling place, now you can go to any vote center that is open in the county. SB 450 was sponsored by Alex Padilla and was modeled after Colorado's 2013 Voter Access and Modernized Elections Act.
2. Nevada County will be a pilot county to implement this bill. Every voter is mailed a ballot. There will be drop off locations, vote centers, increased accessibility and public involvement. There will be expedited results on election night. There will be a staggered opening of vote centers starting 10 days before the election. Vote centers will be a problem solving hub for voters. Voters can vote in person at any of those locations. The VCs will be staffed by employees not by volunteers.

3. There will be a minimum of 5 drop off locations for ballots determined by demographics and community feedback. The drop off boxes will be secure and the ballots will be collected from them daily. One location will be accessible 24 hours a day 7 days a week here at the Rood Center.
4. Every voter is mailed a ballot. They can return a ballot by mail, vote center, or drop off location. It won't be a huge change for Nevada County because 77-78% of its voters are already signed up to receive VBM ballots as of the last General Election in 2016.

C. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Presented by Janice Gosalvez

1. The objective for the LAC is to ensure that the new voting process can be used effectively by voters for whom English is a second language.
2. One requirement is to identify language minority communities. The Nevada County Election's Office (herein referenced as "we") needs the community to help us with this. We need to find good drop off locations.
3. We will be asking for the committee to get together to brainstorm and think of the answers to our questions.
4. In Nevada County, 3% or more of the voting age residents are members of the Spanish language minority and lack sufficient skills in English to vote without assistance. Nevada County is required to translate and post a facsimile ballot and related instructions in Spanish in a conspicuous location at the polling place. We do not yet fall into that category with any other language communities. We need to make a good faith effort to recruit bilingual poll workers for any precinct in which we meet that 3%. In the past that has been difficult to find bilingual poll workers, with the committees help, Janice thinks we will have a better time doing it. An attendee asked for clarification on how the location is defined for which the language accommodations must be made. Kristin Kopec explained that the county is split up into different precincts.
5. We also need to identify our media plans for the VCA in relation to language minority communities.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT / QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

An attendee asked if the voter information packet will be available in Spanish. Greg Diaz said we are looking at expanding our VIP packets so that some segments are in Spanish. Candidates are able to provide their statements in another language as an option. State propositions are always done in different languages; you can access those via the Secretary of State's website.

And attendee would like to advocate for the burden of translations to not fall on the candidates because they often do not have the money to pay for them. She said that in non-primary English speaking communities there may be less computer access to be able to access websites to do research and that it behooves us to make that easier by providing some sort of print for this. She says there's not a large number of Spanish speakers here so it wouldn't take a lot of effort to do this, it's only one other language.

An attendee had advice on how to translate complex information in a way that speaks to people who may not have a grasp of the English language. At first, she was operating under the assumption that it was enough to just translate something and provide it online in the same format and mediums that one would offer it to English speakers. However, it was pointed out to her that you can't necessarily assume that all speakers of a language have the same grasp of their own language that maybe a college-educated English speaking person would. It's not enough to translate directly into Spanish; you really have to think about the capacity of the person speaking that language, and what level of information you're providing. Sometimes the appropriate thing to do is to simplify the message so that it is actually useable.

An attendee suggested providing a simplified translation and one with the original, more complex message. Another attendee said that they would provide the simplified message and provide links so that people who were savvy enough to navigate a webpage could have access to the more complex information. They also said that there is a balancing act between oversimplifying information and providing a useful message. You don't want to simplify to the point that you are doing a disservice.