



REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

ALAMEDA COUNTY • CALIFORNIA

TIM DUPUIS
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

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DEPUTY REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

Date: November 13, 2020
To: Members of the Media
From: Tim Dupuis, Registrar of Voters, County of Alameda

Handling record turn-out (81%) in the middle of a pandemic with new voting regulations in place, the County of Alameda Registrar of Voters (“ROV”) received and successfully processed nearly 800,000 ballots from its 966,088 registered voters for this General Election. The ROV was able to do so through the efforts of its staff and over 1700 poll workers stationed for four days at 100 accessible voting locations (“vote centers”) throughout the County.

Members of the media and advocacy groups raised questions regarding several issues that occurred over the course of this record-setting vote effort. The ROV has actively and aggressively worked to address these concerns and is able to share the following:

Touchscreen Voting at Mills College Vote Center

Uniquely for this election, all registered voters were mailed a vote by mail ballot to cast their vote. Voters could choose to deposit their ballots into one of 66 regionally located drop boxes, United States mailboxes, or by delivering it to one of 100 vote centers. 726,556 voters voted by mail using one of the above methods. Out of that number, 373,472 used the regional drop boxes.

56,722 voters chose to vote in person at one of 100 vote centers. Of that number, 28,297 used one of the touchscreen devices located at each vote center. Approximately, 300 voters used the touchscreen at the Mills College Vote Center location.

The ROV learned on the afternoon of November 3, 2020, that a number of the 300 voters who used the touchscreen at Mills College left without casting their ballots. They instead retained them as “receipts.” That number is at most 160 voters, but is likely much less. The ROV immediately began its investigation and was able to confirm definitively that it received 140 ballots on Election Day from Mills College touchscreen voters.

The ROV immediately began contacting Mills College touchscreen voters—by email, telephone and regular mail—to collect retained ballots, and even offered to pick up ballots from voters. To date, the ROV has received 22 ballots. The ballots have a unique watermark that cannot be duplicated, so the ROV can determine whether it is an authentic ballot. So far, the number of ballots that may have been retained is not sufficient to determine the outcome of any race.

The ROV provided advanced training to poll workers on use of the touchscreen equipment, provided a resource training guide onsite that confirmed the process, and

the helpline was up and running for on the spot poll worker questions and problem solving. All poll workers should have been aware that the touchscreen machines printed out a ballot for deposit onsite, not as a receipt. The ROV cannot account for how this occurred given the training and resources available to poll workers. The problem does not appear systemic. No information indicates this anomaly arose at any other vote center.

The ROV provides different levels of training for its poll workers, including the clerks, judges, and captains. The training materials and sessions train the poll workers at all levels that touchscreen ballots must be deposited into the official ROV trolley at each vote center. The ROV has not received any similar reports from any other vote center within the County.

The ROV Provided Ballots in Seven Different Languages at All 100 Vote Center Locations

Due to recent legislation in response to COVID-19, the ROV stood up 100 vote centers that were open for four days, October 31 – November 3, 2020. Voters were able to cast their ballots at the location of their choosing rather than by precinct. All vote centers were able to access all ballot types used in Alameda County—i.e., the ballots specific to each city, the county and all special districts, and state and federal voting districts. The County of Alameda had 2,707 ballot types for this election, and the ROV must provide election materials in seven different languages.

Although recent legislation authorized the vote center model, not all laws were updated to account for the consequences of the vote center model, namely the requirement that the ROV post facsimile copies of each ballot in each of seven languages. The ROV made election materials, including facsimile ballots, available at each vote center in seven different languages. The ROV complied with its obligation to post by posting “notices” in each one of the seven languages indicating that voters could request a facsimile ballot on demand in each language.

The ROV took this approach because posting each ballot type in each of the seven languages was not feasible. To put this in perspective, given the 2,707 ballot types for this election, the ROV would need to print and post over 10,000 pages at each of the 100 vote center locations.

After conferring with the ACLU and its affiliated groups, the ROV agreed to go further and post a single ballot type in each required language at each location. The ROV also reiterated and communicated to its poll workers that facsimile ballots can be printed on demand in any one of the seven languages and issued to any voter. The ROV has a history of promoting language access in the voting process.

The ROV Posts Ranked-Choice Voting (“RCV”) Updates

The ROV posts RCV voting updates when it updates all election results. To avoid confusion, the ROV only posts the latest RCV results of first choice votes on its website. It provides complete details of RCV results upon request as indicated on its website. When the ROV receives a request, it emails a link to the historical updates of the RCV rounds. If you would like the link, please contact the ROV.

The ROV Worked With Cities To Prioritize Drop Box Locations

Recent COVID-19 legislative changes required counties using vote centers to provide a specified number of drop boxes throughout the county where voters could drop off their ballots. Anticipating a rush to obtain drop boxes statewide, the ROV ordered 38 drop boxes from its vendor on July 22, 2020 – two weeks before the COVID-19 legislative changes went into effect. The 38 drop boxes were in addition to the 28 drop boxes deployed within the County from prior elections.

Despite the ROV’s best efforts, the vendor and its supplier had issues satisfying orders in a timely fashion because multiple counties needed drop boxes for the upcoming election at the same time. Additionally, only a limited number of vendors make the type of drop boxes required for an election. Acting proactively to place the drop boxes most effectively as they arrived, the ROV reached out to the city clerks and city managers for all of the cities within the County to seek the cities’ input and assistance regarding the best placement and began installing boxes on a flow basis as they arrived.

The ROV had additional obligations to prepare each drop box (regardless of when the vendor delivered it) prior to final installation at its fixed location. The ROV wrapped each drop box with an informational cover in 14 languages, delivered it, and geo-coded the drop box’s location.

The ROV continues to post election updates daily or as warranted, as the ROV marches towards certifying the results of this record-setting election.