



Orange County Registrar of Voters
COMMUNITY ELECTION WORKING GROUP
FEBRUARY 24, 2021
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

Neal Kelley called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

Present:

Adria M. Jimenez, City Clerk, City of Buena Park
Theresa Bass, City Clerk, City of Anaheim
Daisy Gomez, City Clerk, City of Santa Ana
CEW Vice-Chair, Lucinda Williams, City Clerk, City of Fullerton
Tammy Kim, Managing Director, Korean American Center/Korean Community Services
Mike Chen, Chairman, South Coast Chinese Cultural Association to the Asian Community
Tim Cheng, Co-President, Asian American Senior Citizens Service Center
Eddie Marquez, Executive Board Member, OC Hispanic Chamber
Debra Marsteller, Executive Director, Project Independence
Paul Spencer, Attorney, Disability Rights California
Gabriel Taylor, Voting Rights Advocate
Judith Barnes, Senior Community Representative
Anna Jimenez Plank, Vote Center Customer Service Representative
Randall Avila, Executive Director, Republican Party of Orange County
Wanda Shaffer, Representative, League of Women Voters of OC
Alexander Williams, Youth Representative
Lyle Brakob, Veterans Affairs Representative
Justin Berardino, Operations Manager, Registrar of Voters
Jackie Wu, Community Outreach Manager, Registrar of Voters
Imelda Carrillo, Election Services Manager, Registrar of Voters
CEW Secretary, Marcia Nielsen, Candidate and Voter Services Manager,
Registrar of Voters
Neal Kelley, Registrar of Voters

**WELCOME AND APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 22, 2020 CEW MEETING MINUTES;
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS; ELECTION OF NEW CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR; OTHER
HOUSEKEEPING**

Neal Kelley thanked the group for attending and welcomed the new members. He asked if there are any questions, comments, or suggestions to simply speak up in lieu of using the raise hand function in our zoom platform. Neal Kelley introduced the Registrar of Voters' Managers, who in turn, introduced their staff. Neal Kelley thanked the entire team for all the dedication and hard work in the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election.

Neal Kelley then introduced Daisy Gomez, who is serving in the CEW group since Molly Perry retired at the end of 2020. Daisy Gomez stated that she is happy to participate and has a long history with Neal Kelley and the election process.

Imelda Carrillo stated that there are members whose terms expired December 31, 2020. They were contacted and asked if they were interested in continuing to serve. The following members have agreed to serve another term through December 31, 2022: Adria Jimenez, Charles Kim, Tim Cheng, Eddie Marquez, Paul Spencer, Randall Avila, Alexander Williams, and Garrett Fahy. There were two members that were unable to confirm, and one that was unable to serve another term. Neal Kelley proposed that we table the election of Chair and Vice-Chair to our next meeting, which was approved. He added that CEW Chair Ruben Alvarez, Jr. is having technical difficulties and is unable to attend our meeting.

OVERVIEW OF NOVEMBER 2020 ELECTION; VOTER DATA AND TRENDS; LESSONS LEARNED; COVID-19 IMPACTS; LANGUAGE SUPPORT; DISABLED ACCESS SUPPORT, OVERALL OUTREACH

Neal Kelley provided an overview of the November 2020 election. This election year was very busy and included changing the way we vote as we transitioned to Vote Centers. We also implemented a new voting system and conducted an election under COVID-19 restrictions. Neal Kelley reviewed the trends and challenges but was pleased that this was a clean election without any major incidences.

Neal Kelley stated that delegations from Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Georgia are coming to visit, including senior legislative leaders and lawmakers. He stated this is a testament to the work of the team and that we will continue to focus on conducting successful elections.

Neal Kelley discussed the historic voter turnout for the November 2020 election, as it was third only to 1960 and 1964. He added that the 90% turnout from those elections were when we had only 400,000 registered voters. For the November election, we had an 87.3% turnout with 1.8 million voters and a high level of engagement. Our County had the highest turnout for any of the large urban counties in California. Neal Kelley displayed a voter turnout graph and comparison to 2016. He anticipates that voter turnout will continue to increase throughout the 2022 elections. Neal Kelley next discussed how party affiliation and first-time voter trends changed, noting that there was an increase in all the parties and the No Party Preference voters.

Neal Kelley stated that he believes that COVID-19 has set the stage for voter behavior. He added that Governor Newsom just signed SB 29 requiring all counties in California to mail vote-by-mail ballots to all voters, regardless if the county is a Vote Center county. This will impact future elections. There was a record number of voters (1,285,629) that chose to use their mailed ballot, whether this was voted at a Vote Center or a ballot drop box or via mail. He added that voters have moved in this direction by themselves. Since 40% of voters returned their ballots by utilizing the ballot drop boxes, they are demonstrating that they trust the system and feel confident about using the ballot drop boxes. Neal Kelley added that during the last seven to eight days prior to the election, voters were using the ballot drop boxes rather than the mail. He also appreciated the impressive performance of the USPS in this election.

Neal Kelley informed the group that we collect survey data and feedback to evaluate our performance and work to improve voter satisfaction. These results are published in an election year report. He mentioned that we achieved high levels of satisfaction from voters that called the public phone bank and evaluated our training and candidate filing processes. Neal Kelley introduced Rebecca Lee, our Training and Special Projects Manager who compiles these reports.

Neal Kelley recognized the hard work that went into preparing for in-person voting under COVID-19, protecting voters and staff. Most of the elections officials did not want to have in-person voting in November but moved forward incorporating state and federal requirements after the legislature directed us to do so. He noted that there weren't any significant COVID-19 outbreaks at Vote Centers. Theresa Bass commended Neal Kelley and the Registrar of Voters' team. She provided positive feedback from voters that voted in Anaheim, especially at the Honda Center. She added that voters loved the drive-thru voting. Tammy Kim stated that she had a positive experience voting at the Chinese Cultural Center in Irvine and that she appreciated the language access support. Eddie Marquez thanked Neal Kelley for his professionalism and passion.

Jackie Wu next discussed bilingual support for the November Election. She stated that we exceeded the in-person language support requirements by approximately 150%. In addition, we increased our internal staffing for translations and voter support. She thanked her team for having the translated election materials ready to be mailed out at the same time as the English. She added that we saw a significant increase in the number of federally mandated language requests.

Imelda Carrillo discussed supporting voters with disabilities. She stated that one of the new features for this election was curbside voting at every Vote Center, noting that there were 79 voters that used this service. Each site had a huge A-frame sign that provided a phone number that voters could call. A Customer Service Representative would come out to serve the voter. In addition, there were 435 voters that requested assistance at the Vote Centers. These requests are captured by the electronic poll books. There was also one voter that was assisted via an ASL interpreter on a tablet. Imelda Carrillo added that 6,014 voters accessed the RAVBM system and that 1,992 ballots were downloaded. There were also 10 large print Voter Information Guides and 67 emergency ballot requests. We will continue to work with the CEW VAC group to improve the Voter Information Guide.

Neal Kelley next discussed the Registrar of Voters' overall outreach plans. He stated that we held more than 55 virtual presentations and public meetings between August to October. He added that he will share this report with the group. Jackie Wu acknowledged that there would be a great deal to communicate to voters about the changes from the Primary Election. This extensive marketing and advertising included billboards, direct mail, print, online, and transit ads. She stated that we received over 25,000 impressions and contacts. We produced over 70 videos that were accessible in 10 language and closed captions. These videos were available on our website and YouTube and were played at the Honda Center. In addition, we had 200,000 impressions per day on social media. Neal Kelley displayed examples of the micro-targeted materials including media billboards, social media, direct marketing pieces in all languages with demographic-specific images.

Neal Kelley reviewed our battle with disinformation. In response, we put a series of myths and trusted responses into a Q&A session on our website. PEW Research indicates that elections officials are the number one source for trusted information.

2021 ELECTIONS; 2ND DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VACANCY ELECTION; POSSIBLE 2021 STATEWIDE GOVERNOR RECALL ELECTION

Neal Kelley provided an update on the Second Supervisorial District Vacancy Election on March 9, 2021. To date, we have 52,000 ballots returned, which is about 14% turnout. He stated that special elections generally have a 25 - 27% turnout. Neal Kelley said that we are prepared to open in-person voting on Saturday at 8:00 a.m. This election will feature the traditional Vote Center model. He stated that there will be a total of 13 Vote Centers plus the Registrar of Voters. There will be seven full-service Vote Centers with full language support open on Saturday, plus an additional six that will open next Saturday. Imelda Carrillo stated that there will be two sites with drive-thru options.

Neal Kelley updated the group on the potential recall of the Governor. The proponents have been collecting signatures since June 10, 2020. Neal Kelley is certain we will have an election. The deadline to submit signatures is March 17, 2021. The election could be as soon as the end of August or early September for a stand-alone election, or the election could be consolidated with the fall elections.

Justin Berardino discussed the specifics of signatures, stating that the proponents need 1,495,709 valid signatures to force a recall election. Orange County has received 207,542 signatures. We have checked 130,623 signatures with an 80% validity rate. Neal Kelley said that this validity rate is the key indicator that an election will happen. Justin Berardino elaborated that 1.7 million signatures have been gathered statewide, but that only 1.1 million signatures have been filed with the counties. He stated that counties have until April 29, 2021 to submit the signature verification results. Neal Kelley discussed the administration of the recall efforts and that proponents have followed best practices.

UPDATED OVERVIEW OF NEW ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PLAN (EAP); BALLOT DROP BOX UPDATE (ISSUES AND MAINTENANCE); DATA ON DROP BOX USAGE

Neal Kelley reviewed the robust plan that was in place for the Election Administration Plan (EAP), forming the road map for Vote Center implementation and operations. Jackie Wu spoke about Elections Code § 4005 that requires counties to consider revising their EAPs within two years. Since we submitted our EAP in October 2019, the deadline for the revised EAP is October 2021. Jackie Wu stated that we are creating our timeline for public meetings. Neal Kelley encouraged members to provide feedback before we submit the revised EAP to the Secretary of State's office.

Neal Kelley next discussed ballot drop box collection. He stated that the ballots are picked up in black bags, many which broke under the weight of volume of the ballots. David Goulding detailed that ballots were picked up in teams of two. Staff is trained and given an oath and can be identified with vests and Registrar of Voters' ID. They have radio contact with our office at every action and utilize random routes for security purposes.

David Goulding said we have quarterly cleaning and inspections and that graffiti is removed within 24 hours upon notification. By tomorrow, all ballot drop boxes not involved in this election will be cleaned and inspected.

Espie Martinez stated that we saw tremendous support with our ballot drop boxes. She noted that in November, we had 116 operative ballot drop boxes, reflecting additional ballot drop boxes added between March and November. She noted that we wanted to expand options for voters, including walk-up and drive-thru only locations. In March, 18% of ballots were returned via ballot drop box. For November, 45% of ballots were returned through ballot drop boxes. She added that voters could track their ballots through OC Ballot Express. There were 44 of 116 ballot drop boxes that had ballot returns of over 5,000. Espie Martinez stated that only two of 116 boxes saw ballot returns under 1,000.

UPDATE FROM CEW VOTING ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE (VAAC) AND CEW VOTING LANGUAGE COMMITTEE (LAAC); 2021 U.S. CENSUS ISSUES AND REDISTRICTING (OPERATIONAL IMPACTS)

Imelda Carrillo announced that Gabe Taylor was elected to serve as CEW VAAC Co-Chair. There was a discussion on how this group works to improve accessibility. She thanked the subcommittee members for their high participation and attendance. Gabe Taylor stated that there were 19 members that attended last meeting, reflecting a significant increase. He recognizes that continued feedback is important for this group. Gabe Taylor stated that the RAVBM numbers were high and that curbside voting is appreciated. He said that it is sometimes challenging for voters with disabilities to vote in-person as many are immune-compromised. Gabe Taylor liked having the options available for voters with disabilities, thanking Neal Kelley and his staff for making this a priority. Gabe Taylor said that he and others are committed to assist in any way. Imelda Carrillo stated that she appreciates this partnership, which helps us to give equal access to all. Neal Kelley also thanked Gabe Taylor and his team for their passion and support.

Jackie Wu announced that Tim Cheng was elected Co-chair of CEW LAAC. Tim Cheng brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this position, having served in prior elections. In their meeting, they reviewed the November 2020 General Election Data and Trends and language requests. This information will be a preview of the Voting Rights Act Compliance and Bilingual Outreach Report which will be finalized later this year. She added they also discussed virtual outreach and engagement strategies under COVID-19 restrictions. Tim Cheng joined the CEW group in 2012. He said that he has witnessed many achievements by our office, including the successful transition to Vote Centers. He thanked Neal Kelley for setting up these meetings helping to better serve the language communities. Tim Cheng suggested that we use census data, birthplace, and last name in addition to requests for translated materials to determine the number of language Vote Center Customer Service Representatives. Jackie Wu said that we follow the Elections Code and census data from 2010 and she looks forward to the new data that we will receive later this year. Neal Kelley thanked Tim Cheng for his involvement and serving his community. Neal Kelley said that we will explore Tim Cheng's suggestion at the next committee meeting.

Neal Kelley stated that COVID-19 has delayed the census data from July 31, 2021 to September 30, 2021. This has significant impacts on candidate filing and the June 2022 election. Neal Kelley said that the deadline for jurisdictions to provide new boundaries is E-125, which is February 2, 2022. It is likely that the data won't be available to us until after the first of the year. The Petitions in-Lieu of Filing Fee portion of candidate filing begins December 16, 2021. The City Clerks will also have a challenge with this timeline. Neal Kelley announced that our office will be hosting a Redistricting Academy and that we will provide this to all school and special districts. If there is any further delay, this will impact the June 7, 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election.

Justin Berardino said that the delayed census results are creating a cascading effect. He stated that since our office has been updating multiple jurisdictions to reflect the change in voting methods, our GIS process is more mature than other counties. However, with the close of candidate filing on March 11, 2022, there is a very short timeframe to analyze the data, create the new district boundaries, and for the Citizens Redistricting Commission and the County Redistricting Commission to review the data. Public input is also required.

In Neal Kelley's closing remarks, he called for review and approval of the meeting minutes from the October 22, 2020 meeting. Theresa Bass made a MOTION to approve, which was seconded by Tim Cheng. The minutes were APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Neal Kelley thanked Anna Jimenez Plank for her service as a CEW member and poll worker for many years. He added that his action items include sending the Marketing Material Summary Report, this presentation, and minutes. Our next meeting will be held in the summer; a date will be provided.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Nielsen, CEW Secretary