

California Voter's Choice Act (Senate Bill 450)

Conducting an All-Mailed Ballot/Vote Center Election in Nevada County
For the June 5, 2018 Statewide Direct Primary Election

Vote Centers:

Vote Centers will resemble polling places providing voters the option to vote in person. While previously, in a typical polling place election, voters could only vote their correct ballot at their local polling place or one of our two 29-day Early Voting Centers, voters will now be able to cast their correct ballot at any Vote Center countywide. Additionally, at each Vote Center, voters will be able to update their voter registration, use an accessible voting device, conditionally register to vote and cast a provisional ballot. Vote Centers will have secure access to the County's Election Management System (EMS) allowing our Vote Center personnel to verify voter registration and to verify, in real time, the voting status of each voter in an election. Each Vote Center will be equipped with at least three eSlate electronic voting machines that are accessible to voters with disabilities. This will ensure our Vote Centers have a sufficient number of voting machines to serve the expected turnout and meet all accessibility standards under Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

All Vote Centers will be open at least eight hours per day including weekends and holidays and open 7 AM to 8 PM on Election Day. One Vote Centers (Rood Center) will begin operations 29 days before an election. Five more Vote Centers will open the Saturday before Tuesday's election for a total of seven (7) Vote Centers.

Ballot Drop-Off Locations:

At least one Ballot Drop-Off location is required for every 15,000 registered voters; we are contemplating having eight locations to sufficiently serve the county. Ballot Drop-Off locations shall be available beginning no less than 28 days before Election Day.

Vote-By-Mail Ballots:

A vote by mail packet, including the ballot, will be mailed beginning 29 days before Election Day to each registered voter, with information on voting options and ballot return information. Voters may request a vote by mail ballot in a language other than English, pursuant to Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act. Voters with disabilities may request a ballot that can be read and marked privately and independently pursuant to the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

Voter Education and Outreach:

The Voters Choice Act requires the County to develop a Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) and a Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC). Nevada County also developed a Voter Education and Outreach Committee. The focus of the committees is to inform voters on all aspects of the election including Vote Center and Ballot Drop-Off locations. The committees initiate outreach activities and provide materials that are accessible to voters with disabilities and voters who do not speak English.

Our committees have held multiple public meetings with community organizations and individuals that advocate on behalf of, or provide services to, individuals with disabilities and voters of language minority groups.

Nevada County Elections has complied with all statutory requirements in developing and drafting an Election Administrative Plan (EAP). After the required comment period which ends on December 11th, 2017, the County's final EAP will be submitted to the California Secretary of State for approval.

Within two (2) years of conducting the first election under the law, and every four years thereafter, the Nevada County Registrar of Voters must hold further meetings to consider revisions to the final EAP.

Voting Technology:

Nevada County will be deploying our existing Hart Intercivic Electronic Voting System and eSlate voting machines at all Vote Centers during the June 5, 2018 Statewide Direct Primary Election. Our voter registration database administered by the State of California, VoteCal will be linked to a network of personal computers through a VPN connection at all County Vote Centers. This will provide near real-time access to the voter registration database by Vote Center staff, enabling staff to determine the registration and voter status of every voter countywide in real time.

It is our plan to begin the process of evaluating newly State certified voting systems in FY 2018/19 to replace our aging voting system which is now reaching the end of its useful life. The new voting system will be designed to operate in a Vote Center model using state-of-the-art technology deploying EMS connectivity, accessible machines and ballot on demand systems. It is our goal to have a new voting system in place for the 2020 Presidential Primary Election.

Liability:

300 poll workers for each election represent significant risk to the County. Nevada County has had to issue workers' compensation benefits in the past to poll workers. As agents of the County, there are also potential malicious and unintentional acts committed by poll workers that the County may be held liable for. One party that reluctantly agreed to be a vote center was hesitant because the actions of a past poll worker, during the last election, destroyed the paint on the walls of their facility. Legal liability aside, the actions of bad poll workers reflect poorly on not only the Elections Office, but on Nevada County as a whole.

This risk is significantly reduced with 28-34 vote center staff. With a 90% reduction in staffing, the hiring process can be much more thorough and we can focus on only hiring people who have done good work for the Elections Office in the past. 300 vs 30 workers is also just significantly less risk statistically.

Voter Behavior:

It is critical to not underestimate changes in voter behavior and election models and their impact on election administration. Under the polling place model, the Elections Office has a strong idea of what kind of foot traffic to expect at each polling place and the best practices to keep everything running smoothly.

With the vote center model everything gets turned on its head. We cannot reasonably expect to know which voter centers will need more staff hours on a given day because there is nothing to compare it to. Voters will have a lot more problems and concerns that will need to be addressed due to their unfamiliarity with the new model. This will also affect processes at the vote centers as they won't be able to be directly adapted from what we have done in our office because the volume of particular problems may be much higher. As a result, during the first election, more staff will need to be hired than necessary to ensure the election runs without any problems.

As voters adjust to the new model so will the Elections Office. Less and less voters will be coming into vote centers each election to have their concerns addressed and to vote in person. Voters will continue on the trend of increasing vote-by-mail usage. With lessons learned and changing voting behavior, the Elections Office will be able to optimize staffing hours and workflow with each successive election. This will decrease costs.

Costs & Fiscal Impact:

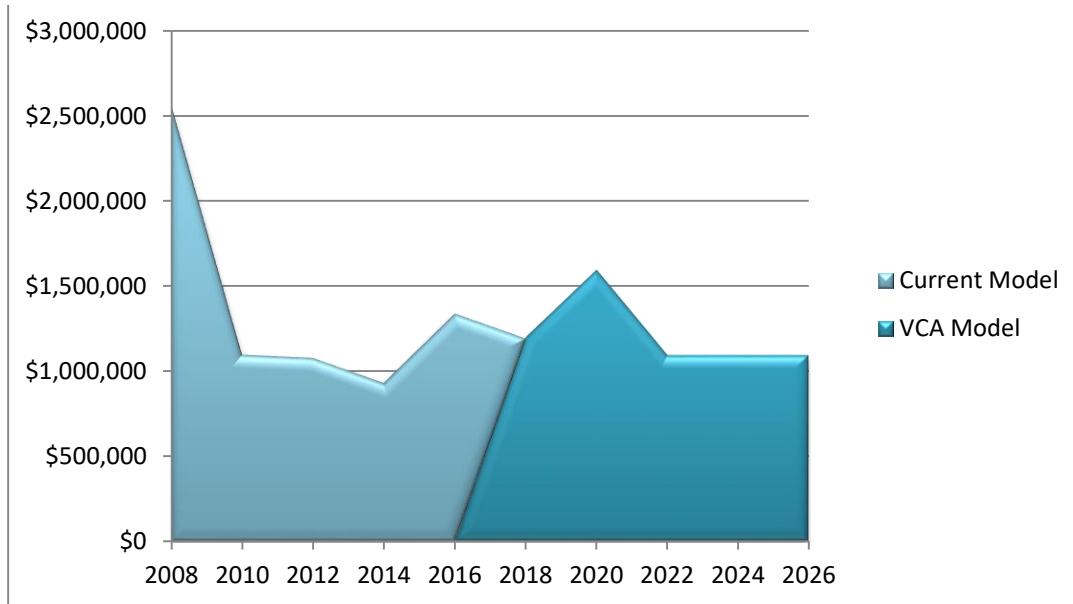
The exact amount of the fiscal impact is unknown at this time. The June 5, 2018 Statewide Direct Primary Election will be the first of its kind, both due to the All-Mailed Ballot/Vote Center model authorized by VCA and several legislative mandates which will have an impact on the cost of conducting elections for counties statewide. The VCA will have a positive impact on mitigating many of the additional costs resulting from these legislative mandates.

AB 1436-Conditional Voter Registration Law and AB 1461 DMV New Motor Voter Law is expected to increase voter registration and turnout adding additional costs. Adoption of the VCA will incur startup costs that will increase election costs in the short-term when compared to a traditional polling place election. Vote Centers will be open longer and staffed by County employees at higher hourly rates than traditional poll workers. Vote Center staff will also require additional training to manage the complexity and technology requirements of Vote Centers. Creating multiple secure connections between Vote Centers and the County's voter registration database will result in greater costs due to equipment, set-up, testing and support requirements. These costs will eventually be off-set by a significant reduction in the number of voting machines that will need to be deployed under the All-Mailed Ballot/Vote Center model. Future elections will also require less outreach and education along with less training for established Vote Center Staff thereby saving costs. Also as voter behavior changes under the VCA, voters will be more comfortable and familiar with the new election model manifesting itself into lowered expenditures by adjusting and modifying VCA staff hours.

Graph and Additional Benefits:

The graph below shows a ten-year history of actual election costs along with a ten-year projection of costs under the new VCA model. The graph accounts for the costs of acquiring new election equipment each decade. Also under our projection of costs for the new ten-year period, I will be adding the costs of the FTE I have requested. If we have approval to hire another FTE that will put our ratio of staff to registered voters at 3 staff for 70,000 registered voters. This puts us in line with other similarly situated counties. (Current staffing is 2 staff for 70,000 registered voters) Please see the attachment.

Cost of Elections



Costs in 2008 include 3 elections and a voting equipment purchase of \$1.3 million. Average election costs are \$519,745 per election under the current model. Election costs under the VCA model are projected to cost \$545,000 per election. Under the VCA model voting equipment is projected to cost \$500,000 and is slated to be purchased in 2020.

As you can see, because of the significant savings in purchasing new election equipment, the ten year costs comparing the polling place model to the VCA are quite revealing. From 2007 to 2017, actual costs of eleven (11) elections plus the purchase of new voting equipment in 2007 comes to **\$7,017,195**. From 2018 to 2028, projected costs of eleven (11) elections plus the purchase of new voting equipment comes to **\$6,495,000**. Once the VCA model has been established, I fully believe election costs will be below the projected \$545,000 per election, bringing the 10 year costs even lower. In our situation, more convenience and enhanced security for our constituents will grade out to be less expensive than the traditional polling place model.

Additional benefits of the Vote Center model:

- Vote Centers provide easier and less costly compliance with accessibility requirements under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Larger, newer facilities that are already ADA compliant are used in most instances.
- Provisional ballot concerns are addressed more efficiently. All ballot styles are available at each Vote Center allowing eligible voters to cast a correct ballot at any Vote Center. There is no wrong place to vote.
- Administration is more efficient than for a precinct polling place model.

- There are costs savings in many areas including requiring fewer election workers and fewer election supplies.
- Poll worker recruitment focuses on experienced and more qualified personnel, leading to more efficient and accurate elections
- Election results will be posted much earlier from seven (7) vote centers as compared to forty-eight (48) polling places.
- Political parties and candidates need fewer volunteers for poll watching.
- Vote Centers work well with paper ballots and are ideal with electronic equipment which can contain all ballot styles and still provide precinct specific reporting.
- Vote Centers provide additional convenience for voters, which fosters increased voter turnout.

As the graph shows, the costs for implementing positive change in Nevada County by setting up a new voting model including updated equipment and technology may be less than costs under a polling place model. It is clear that our very active and highly engaged voting public is eager for the change to VCA and quite willing to pay additional costs to bring efficient and accessible voting to all communities in our county.