

The County Of Nevada



CLERK RECORDER-REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

GREGORY J. DIAZ

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: October 13, 2020

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Nevada County Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters

SUBJECT: Acceptance of the presentation regarding Nevada County's Elections process for the 2020 General Election, November 3, 2020.

RECOMMENDATION: Accept the presentation provided by the Nevada County Registrar of Voters.

FUNDING: None.

BACKGROUND:

Shortly after California held its Presidential Primary in early March, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a shelter in place order to help stop the spread of COVID-19, the novel coronavirus that has been shown to cause serious illness and death in human beings. Election officials across the country felt the weight of responsibility to conduct elections in a safe, secure, and healthy environment as they watched their peers in Wisconsin hold their statewide primary on April 7, 2020—the first state to fully conduct an election under COVID-19. Wisconsin and other jurisdictions saw long Election Day lines, largely due to polling place owners and poll workers backing out of commitments, as well as new COVID-19 infections and deaths amongst those serving in elections. In collaboration with the Secretary of State and advocacy groups, California's local election officials soon started a planning process to meet voter needs under these extraordinary circumstances. These task forces were charged with working together on a set of recommendations to implement changes in the law and processes deemed necessary to offer in person voting services, as well as provide robust support to counties that have no experience sending all registered voters a ballot by mail. The task forces, many of which Nevada County participated in, also included discussions around the political nature of public health, the need to plan for public safety power shutoff (PSPS) and wildfire events, and how recent events affect national security, as election administration is part of the nation's critical infrastructure.

After those task forces were established, Governor Newsom issued Executive Orders 64 and 67, which provide one-time changes that require counties to send all active, registered voters a ballot, give counties discretion to open vote centers starting at 3 days prior to the election (as opposed to the mandatory 10 days), provide that properly completed and postmarked vote by mail ballots could be accepted up to 17 days after the election, and set forth other changes for traditional polling place (non-Voter's Choice Act) counties. Those Executive Orders have since been codified by the passage of AB 860 and SB 423. The state further provided resources to help counties better

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recruit election workers, communicate with voters about statewide changes, retain voting locations, and keep those locations and elections headquarters powered.

In addition, there have been several catalytic events that election officials cannot control but that nonetheless affect the voting process: the United States has seen a remarkable amount of civil unrest, increased elections cybersecurity vulnerabilities, increased misinformation and disinformation about the elections process, declining trust in the postal service, and increased skepticism and distrust of media and government. With the availability of online platforms, election officials are not always able to keep pace with every single bit of inaccurate information presented publicly, and once the information is available it is extremely difficult or impossible to correct. Recent events have also raised new questions around the full scope of voter intimidation and voter suppression, as well as the safety of election officials themselves.

It is in this context that Nevada County implements the November 3, 2020 General Election. The Registrar of Voters would like the opportunity to talk about the steps taken to ensure that voting is conducted safely and with integrity.

Nevada County is well situated to handle the statewide mandate to send every registered voter a ballot, due to its extensive experience with the California Voter's Choice Act. Historically, most of the County's electorate has voted by mail and will probably continue to do so. We believe that voters will rely more heavily this election on ballot drop boxes. We also now participate in BallotTrax, which allows voters to receive updates on where their ballot is.

Several voters will choose to vote in person, and the Registrar of Voters is proud to serve all of the County's voters and offer a variety of convenient options. As provided for by law, Nevada County offers one vote center for every 10,000 registered voters on the voter rolls by E-88. In person voting and vote center training changed substantially this election, as several of the County's vote centers used in March were too small to provide safe distancing and too many of our existing processes caused people to come into too much extended contact with people and surfaces. In response, the Registrar of Voters has put a number of processes in place to safely conduct in person voting, including and not limited to personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for vote center workers, supplies and training to keep surfaces clean, changes to line queuing, changes to vote centers, increased availability of vote by mail drop boxes, establishing a will call ballot replacement system, providing power generation to vote centers and buildings that need it, and establishing new lines of communication to law enforcement. The Registrar also continues its ongoing dialogue with the Secretary of State, the USPS mail distribution center located in West Sacramento, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, federal authorities, advocates, and many, many others to ensure that this election is conducted in a safe, welcoming, and secure environment.

Item Initiated by: Natalie Adona

Approved by: Gregory Diaz

Submittal Date:

Revision Date: