



COUNTY OF NEVADA

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Eric Rood Administrative Center

950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 220

Nevada City, CA 95959

(530) 265-7040

Fax 265-9839

E-MAIL: ceo@co.nevada.ca.us

DATE: January 11, 2018

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: **Martin Polt, Deputy County Executive Officer**

SUBJECT: Overview of the Voter Choice Act and the financial impact that its implementation would have on the County's budget.

This memorandum has been drafted to provide the members of the Board with a brief overview of the Voter Choice Act and the financial impact that its implementation would have on the County's budget. The Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters Office is bringing an item to the Board on January 23rd for presentation and approval of a budget amendment.

On September 29, 2016 California Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 450, California Voters Choice Act (VCA), into state law. VCA permits counties to conduct elections in which every voter is mailed a ballot and vote centers and ballot drop-off locations are made available prior to and on Election Day. This model would replace operating polling places only on the day of the election and Vote By Mail (VBM) ballots that are only sent to voters where no polling place is available or upon request.

Although legislation encourages participation it does not require implementation of VCA either now or in the future, and if a county does adopt VCA they can revert to the old model at a future date if desired. Fourteen counties, including Nevada County, are named in the legislation as pilot counties and may implement VCA as of January 2018, and all other counties may adopt on or after January 1, 2020. Pilot counties may opt in or out, and of the fourteen counties five have opted to pilot the VCA model (Madera, Napa, Nevada, Sacramento and San Mateo Counties) in the June 2018 election.

The Nevada County Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters has been discussing the pilot implementation of the VCA since the spring of 2017; this is the first time a VCA related item has been brought before the Board of Supervisors, and no budget has previously been established. On October 31, 2017 the Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters released an initial draft plan of the Election Administration Plan to adopt the VCA model for the upcoming June 5, 2018 Election. The County would go from opening forty-eight (48) polling places on Election Day to operating and administering seven (7) vote centers and mailing out VBM Ballots to all registered voters in the County. Additionally, the model will include two (2) 24-hour Ballot drop-off locations and eight (8) daytime Ballot Drop-off locations that will be open 28 days before the election and through Election Day. The chart below shows the polling locations that have been proposed.

Model Comparison-Location and Days of Operation

	# of Locations	Days of Operation
Polling Place Model	48	1
Vote Center Model	7	3-10

Proposed Voting Centers

Vote Center	Days in Operation
Nevada County Elections Office	29 Days before election day and through the election day
Truckee Town Hall	10 Days before election day and through the election day
Best Western Gold Country Inn, Grass Valley	3 Days before election day and through the election day
Gold Miners Inn, Grass Valley	3 Days before election day and through the election day
Family Resource Center, Truckee	3 Days before election day and through the election day
Penn Valley Fire Protection District Station 43, Penn Valley	3 Days before election day and through the election day
Higgins Lions Community Center, Grass Valley	3 Days before election day and through the election day

The County Executive Office estimates that the draft plan for VCA requires a one-time budget amendment increase to expenses of \$303,141 for FY 2017/18, including one-time costs of \$164,142 and ongoing costs of \$138,999 which will occur in FY 2017/18 and future years. The Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters has estimated an ongoing cost increase of approximately \$27,000. The ongoing costs will likely be somewhere between the two estimates.

The Elections Office has also proposed replacing their voting equipment in the Fall of FY2019/20. The voting equipment being used currently was purchased in 2007 through state match funding of 75% made available from the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) with a total cost of \$1,373,018 and an estimated useful life of 10 years. The current voting system remains vendor supported and maintained. It is anticipated maintenance and repair cost of the current voting equipment will increase as we continue to utilize the equipment. If the county chooses to implement the VCA model and that model is selected for the long-term, the Elections office estimates savings of \$616,678 with new VCA equipment costs being estimated at \$483,000; whereas under the current polling place model equipment cost approximately \$1,099,678. In the VCA model, each voting location would require more substantial election equipment, but there would be far fewer places requiring equipment, thus the reason for the savings. It is recommended that the proposal of new voting equipment consider county practices of a Request for Proposals (RFP), and proactive participation in any State revenue that may be provided for such equipment, if available. Other counties are in similar situations with aging voting equipment and are evaluating their options. The 2018/2019 January Governor's Budget for California includes funding of approximately \$134 million for statewide voting systems replacement for all necessary hardware, software, and initial licensing. The funding assumes the state and county will each share 50 percent of the costs and will be available to all counties.