



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

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Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

Los Angeles County Voting Systems Assessment Project
Concept Paper
August 22, 2009

Overview

The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) in partnership with the Voting Technology Project (VTP) seeks to develop and implement an innovative election practice in the assessment of and search for voting systems. The *Voting Systems Assessment Project* is an unprecedented election practice premised on a collaborative approach that ensures greater citizen input through partnerships within the academic community, public interest organizations, and policy makers, in the pursuit of establishing a more participatory model for procuring voting systems.

As a principal partner in the project, the Voting Technology Project has agreed to serve as the fiscal agent for the project. The Voting Technology Project was established by Caltech President David Baltimore and MIT President Charles Vest in December 2000 to prevent a recurrence of the problems that threatened the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election. Since establishment, members of the VTP have studied all aspects of the election process, both in the United States and abroad. VTP faculty, research affiliates, and students have written many working papers, published scores of academic articles and books, and worked on a great array of specific projects.

All of this research and policymaking activity seeks to develop better voting technologies, to improve election administration, and to deepen scientific research in these areas.

Today, members of the VTP are active in:

- Developing better voting systems standards and testing practices
- Studying and developing novel and improved post-election auditing procedures
- Assessing and evaluating the voting experience in federal elections
- Examining ways to make the process of voter registration more secure and more accessible
- Evaluating methods of voter authentication, and their effects on the election process
- Improving voting technologies

Introduction

Los Angeles County is the nation's largest and most diverse election jurisdiction, serving more than four million registered voters comprised of multiple races/ethnicities, national origins, age groups, and socio-economic status. Within the County, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk discharges the duties of Registrar of Voters, responsible for voter registration and the administration of accessible, secure, and transparent elections for county, state, and federal contests. Over the past decade, the environment and demands under which the Registrar of Voters administers elections have become increasingly complex; challenged by a growing and diverse electorate, an aging voting system, a fluid regulatory environment that has limited voting systems development, and the recent phenomenon of special vacancy elections. Many of these complexities are not unique to Los Angeles County but, they are compounded by two critical factors: 1) the size and diversity of the jurisdiction; 2) the current state of its voting system. The first critical factor is natural, a healthy challenge to strengthening local democracy. However, an accessible, secure, and reliable voting system is essential to the administration of good elections and a critical issue to be addressed. As a proactive response, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk seeks to launch an unprecedented Voting Systems Assessment Project (VSAP) to determine current and future needs to be addressed through the modernization of the County's voting system.

Size and Diversity of Los Angeles County Electorate

The County administers elections for more registered voters than 38 of the 50 states in the Union. In 2008, the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk assisted more than 3.3 million voters in successfully casting ballots in the November Presidential Election. The County is also one of the nation's most diverse jurisdictions. Currently, Los Angeles County provides language assistance in seven different languages as part of its commitment to providing accessible elections for all registered voters and in compliance with provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act. The size and diversity of Los Angeles County makes it almost impossible to reasonably consider a Commercial Off the Shelf (COTS) voting system solution. Any solution will entail a significant development process that will require clear and established principles/needs to be satisfied by a voting system. Further, we are cognizant that an adequate solution for a jurisdiction as large and complex as Los Angeles may involve not only the development of new systems and technologies but also changes to the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern voting systems development and process at the present time. With the franchise of millions at stake the need for this project is vital.

State of Los Angeles County's Voting System

The current *InkaVote Plus* and *Microcomputer Tally System* voting systems have served, and continues to serve, the voters of Los Angeles County with accuracy and integrity, but the design of the system and the age of the technology upon which it was built, do not offer the technical and functional elasticity necessary to continue to accommodate the growing electorate, its diversity, and needed innovations to help improve the accessibility and efficiency of elections. The current voting system was developed by the County's Information Technology Systems branch of the Internal Services Department (ISD). The original systems, the Automated Ballot Layout (ABL), the Election Tally System (ETS), and the Election Results Inquiry System (ERIS), were developed over 30 years ago using IBM mainframe computing technology. While RR/CC still uses the mainframe ABL and ERIS system, the ballot tabulation component of the ETS system was migrated in the mid 1990's to a DOS-based PC platform called the Microcomputer

Tally System (MTS), which resides on an isolated token ring network at RR/CC's headquarters. Several ISD employees, none of whom were the original developers of the systems, continue to maintain the ABL, ETS, MTS, and ERIS systems. Ongoing attrition of ISD staff due to retirement, and the increasing difficulty of finding replacement staff with requisite skills in obsolete mainframe technologies make the replacement of these systems an urgent priority for the department. This dynamic, and its impacts are exacerbated by the fluid nature of the regulatory process governing elections both at the state and federal levels.

The Voting System Assessment Project (VSAP)

Traditionally and, more so, in recent years the evaluation and procurement of voting systems has focused disproportionately on the technical integrity and security of voting system hardware, software, and programming, all extremely important factors to ensuring the integrity and security of our democratic process. However, there has been less of a balance when it comes to considering the "people" element in the process. Public input in the voting systems acquisition process has usually been limited to the approval phase, usually by providing comment on a number of voting systems selected by the Elections Official in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP). In common business practice end user input is critical as the product intended for use must meet the needs of the consumer. In the voting systems procurement process these practices have fallen out of balance and are overshadowed by technical requirements and regulatory parameters.

The VSAP seeks to establish a new participatory approach that initiates the process with public input to ensure the "people" element is well balanced with those of "technology" and "regulations." More importantly, this new "assessment" model would dictate the needs a voting system should satisfy rather than determining how the jurisdiction's needs could adapt to the voting system. Similarly, any process looking at voting systems needs must address both the current elections environment and jurisdictions' needs, but should provide adequate capacity for the future needs and expectations of our future electorate. As such, the VSAP will be founded on principles of participation and transparency, serving as a unique model for voting system acquisition and/or development and implementation.

1. Stakeholder Convenings

The assessment project will be comprised of a series of convenings that will be anchored on public input from individual voters and community activists, to community organizations. The input from these initial discussions will serve to establish the fundamental principles that will drive subsequent discussions concerning technology, legal requirements, and regulations. Essentially, the VSAP will be structured to allow the community to identify what they want in a voting system while, in turn, the County, lawmakers, regulators, and technology experts, would discuss and consider the feasibility of such a voting system. The table below provides an outline of the proposed convenings:

Los Angeles County Voting Systems Assessment Project Proposed Convenings and Schedule	
1. Public Stakeholder Symposium <i>(September 2009)</i>	Kick-off convening. Will gather a broad based group of stakeholders including advocates and community organizations with the intended goal of engaging in a discussion about factors like <i>usability, security & accuracy, accessibility, and flexibility.</i>
2. Roundtable with Voting Technology Experts <i>(October 2009)</i>	A convening with computer scientists, academics, and other voting technology experts. The roundtable will discuss current and anticipated technologies within the context of developing a system that could meet the needs of Los Angeles County and its voters.
3. Roundtable on the Regulatory Environment for Voting Systems <i>(November 2009)</i>	The convening will discuss the current regulatory environment with an emphasis on recently revised federal Voluntary Voting System Guidelines, as well as best practices and pitfalls in new voting system certification requests.
4. Policy Maker Briefing and Roundtable <i>(December 2009)</i>	This convening will gather key state and county elected officials to provide a briefing on the findings from the three initial convenings. The briefing will serve as a starting point for a discussion regarding current and future legislative approaches and strategies pertaining to elections and voting systems. More importantly, the roundtable would discuss strategies/approaches as they pertain to Los Angeles County's voting system modernization efforts.

2. Voter Control Group

Should funding permit, the project will select five random groups of registered voters to participate in a set of ongoing focus groups. Four of the five groups would be selected to represent key sub-groups within the electorate (e.g. young voters, language minority voters). The size of these groups will vary from 10-15 participants per group. These focus groups would serve as a control group to ensure there is constant voter input and a baseline perspective throughout the process. At least two focus groups with each of the five control groups would be conducted. Participants would agree to participate in both focus groups, rather than recruit a new set of voters for the second round of focus groups.

Currently, we envision the first focus group taking place shortly after the initial public stakeholder convening. The second focus group could take place after the roundtable discussions on the regulatory environment and voting technology experts. Focus group

participants would be asked to discuss and respond to findings from project convenings. In particular, the random voter groups would help to enrich the initial findings of our "Public Stakeholder Symposium." Focus group findings would be included in final and summary analyzes.

3. VSAP Steering Committee

To ensure a fully collaborative and successful project the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk will create a project Steering Committee that will bring together key community organizations (this will include organizations representing key constituencies such as voters with disabilities and language minority voters), voting technology experts, legal experts, and representatives from state and federal regulatory agencies (e.g. California Secretary of State and Election Assistance Commission). The steering committee will provide valuable insight on the planning, coordination, and outreach for the five convenings planned by the project. In addition, the committee would provide valuable input during the drafting of any reports and updates on the findings and recommendations of the VSAP.

4. Final Report and Event Plans

A final report compiling the findings of the project convenings will be prepared. The report will provide a synthesized analysis that weaves all the convenings together. The analysis will serve as a general roadmap and initial set of recommendations for Los Angeles County's voting system modernization plans. The final report would be presented to the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors and disseminated widely to the general public. More importantly the project's findings would serve as the initial step in the development of the next steps in the County's process of procuring and/or developing and implementing a new modernized voting system.

In addition, we recognize that the project's approach may prove to be a valuable new model for other jurisdictions (including states) to adopt or adapt. To facilitate the replication of this approach, we will develop a series of "Event Plans" that will detail the goals and format of each convening. "ADDENDUM 1" provides a sample Plan, prepared in anticipation of the initial Public Stakeholder Symposium.

Summary Project Deliverables

- Stakeholder convenings to collect information about end user interests ;
- Policy maker briefings and discussions;
- Steering Committee of experts and stakeholders representing vital subject areas (e.g. voter access, the regulatory process, legal requirements, technology, and security);
- Quarterly reports on project activities, status, and findings for the period, detailing the project and steering committee's assessment of vital subject areas;
- Individual Convening Plans will be developed to serve as templates for future efforts;
- Final report compiling findings and recommendations of the VSAP; and
- Report to the Board of Supervisors for motion to initiate an RFP process.

Conclusion

Los Angeles County has a unique opportunity to implement a more participatory approach to voting systems modernization, as the largest and most complex county election jurisdiction in the nation. The Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk has an established commitment to citizen input in election administration. Since 1998, the Department has partnered with the community through its Community Voter Outreach Committee. A citizen's committee comprised of diverse organizations, activists, and municipal governments, representing the various constituencies that comprise Los Angeles County. To date, more 120 members have served on the committee (See "ADDENDUM 2"). This important partnership has played a pivotal role in ensuring greater access and transparency of elections in the County. We hope to apply this same approach to the present challenge of modernizing our voting systems. Moreover, Los Angeles County's unrivaled stature as the largest county election jurisdiction and the implementation of the proposed approach presents a tremendous opportunity to change jurisdictions' approach to voting systems evaluation or modernization and reintroduce strong citizen participation into the process.

In addition the project itself promises to be a tremendous catalyst in changing the election practice of developing and procuring voting systems. The approach of defining the needs a voting system must satisfy through actual data prior to procuring a voting system will likely lead to more creative approaches to voting system development. It is very likely that no pre-existing system will satisfy the County's needs. This will lead to a more creative market solution that may include public/private joint development venture, an unprecedented practice that might provide a model for other jurisdictions or states. Regardless, such a practice would have a tremendous on public confidence in the electoral process.

ADDENDUM 1

Public Stakeholder Symposium Event Plan (Draft)

Introduction

The symposium is the initial, and very critical, task of the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's (RR/CC) Voting System Assessment Project. The symposium will gather a broad based group of stakeholders, experts, and advocates with the intended goal of engaging in a discussion concerning attitudes towards our current voting system and important factors to be considered in the search for a new voting system. Factors to be considered include standards for system *usability, security & accuracy, accessibility, and flexibility.*

Partnerships

The symposium is being coordinated in partnership with the Cal-Tech/MIT Voting Technology Project (VTP). The project's mission of improving voting technologies and voting system standards align well with the intent of the RR/CC to implement an improved voting system for Los Angeles County. Additionally, the expertise, work, and integrity of the VTP will prove to be a valuable asset to the overall project.

Meeting Structure

The meeting itself will be structured around several keynote addresses and presentations, followed by a series of moderated round table focus group discussions in groups of no more than 25. Focus group discussions will be led by a group moderator who will facilitate a discussion touching on the factors of interest identified above. Every group will be assigned a scribe/note taker to document the discussion. Two hours for discussion will be allotted. The small group discussion format will require access to breakout rooms or a large enough space that will accommodate a series of small group discussions without too much disruption.

Participants will reconvene after the focus group discussions, where moderators will provide a brief report back of important points made during their discussion and next steps in the development of the assessment project will be presented. The findings from the Symposium will be compiled into a post-symposium report.

Meeting Deliverables

This kickoff meeting will introduce all stakeholders to the Department's assessment project and provide the RR/CC with vital input that will inform our initial assessment and future plans for new voting systems implementation. Following the symposium the RR/CC will provide a means of interactive public input through the establishment of a public comment period, online discussion groups, and similar tools, whereby interested parties/individuals will be encouraged to provide input. The information collected in this initial phase of the assessment project will be compiled into a summary report and will serve to inform the RR/CC's final assessment, ensuing strategies, and events.

Target Group: approximately 150 participants; 8 focus groups.

SAMPLE PUBLIC STAKEHOLDER SYMPOSIUM AGENDA



Envisioning a 21st Century Voting System for Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County Voting Systems Assessment Project

Wednesday, September 16, 2009

DRAFT Symposium Agenda

8:00 am - 9:00 am	Reception
9:00 am - 10:15 am	<p>Morning Plenary Session (Grand Ballroom)</p> <p>Opening Remarks Dean Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (20 min.)</p> <p>Secretary of State Perspective TBD (15 min.)</p> <p>Election Assistance Commission Perspective TBD (15 min.)</p> <p>Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk Perspective Kenneth Bennett, IT Manager, Election Tally Systems (25 min.)</p>
10:15 am - 10:30 am	Morning Break
10:30 am - 11:15 am	Discussion Group Topic 1: Usability
10:15 am - 12:00 pm	Discussion Group Topic 2: Security & Accuracy
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm	<p>Lunch Guest Speaker: TBD (CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project)</p>
1:30 pm - 2:15 pm	Discussion Group Topic 3: Transparency

2:15 pm - 3:00 pm	Discussion Group Topic 4: Flexibility
3:00 pm - 3:15 pm	Afternoon Break
3:15 pm - 4:45 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Afternoon Plenary Session (Grand Ballroom)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Focus Group Reports TBD, Moderator (45 min.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Open Discussion TBD, Moderator (30 min.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Closing Remarks and Next Steps Dean Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (15 min.)</p>
4:45 pm - 5:00 pm	Adjournment

ADDENDUM 2



County of Los Angeles
REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

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Department Headquarters
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Norwalk, California 90850
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CVOC Membership List

18th Street Arts Center
37th Congressional District
ACLU of Southern California
African American Voter Project
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
American Independent Party of Los Angeles County
Andrew Kurth LLP
Armenian National Committee of America
APA for Progress
Arsalyn Foundation
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Pacific American Legal Center
Asian Rehabilitation Services
Association of Soviet Jewish
Braille Institute
Burke, Williams, Sorensen LLP
Business Life
California Council of the Blind
California Democratic Party – S.G. Valley
California Election Protection Network
California for Election Day Registration
California Institute of Technology
Cambodian Association of America
CBS New Election Unit
CAUSE
Central American Resource Center for Youth
Chinese American Citizen Alliance
Citizens Act
City Clerk of Cerritos
City Clerk of Downey
City Clerk of Glendale
City Clerk of Pomona
City of Los Angeles – Dept. on Disability
City of Los Angeles Elections Division
Committee on House Administration
Common Cause California
Community Alliance for the Blind
Community Coalition
Community Power
Compton Unified SD Adult Education
Concerned Pollworkers of Los Angeles
Congresswoman Laura Richardson
Del Sol Foundation
Democracy for America
Developmental Disabilities Area Board 10
Disability Rights California
Disability Right Legal Center
Disabled Resource Center
Easy Voter Guide Project
Emigres
Filipino American Service Group, Inc.
Fox News State and Local Government
Girls Today Women Tomorrow
Great Los Angeles Agency on Deafness
Green Party, Los Angeles County
Hacienda / La Puente School District
Hennigan Bennett & Dorman
Helping Hands for the Blind
Hope for Hearing Foundation
IFES
Independent Living Center – E. San Gabriel
Indo-Chinese Political Action Committee
Japanese American Citizens League
Junior Blind of America
Justice Vision
Kaufman Downing LLP
Korean American Coalition
Korean Resource Center
LA Voters for Instant Runoff Election
LA CDP
League of Women Voters - Beach Cities
League of Women Voters - Beverly Hills
League of Women Voters - Claremont
League of Women Voters - Downey
League of Women Voters - E. S G Valley
League of Women Voters - Glendale/Burbank
League of Women Voters - L.A. Diversity
League of Women Voters - Long Beach Area
League of Women Voters - Los Angeles
League of Women Voters - L.A. County
League of Women Voters - Palos Verdes
League of Women Voters - Pasadena Area
League of Women Voters - Santa Monica
League of Women Voters - Smart Voter
League of Women Voters - Torrance
League of Women Voters - Whittier
L.A. Board of Supervisors, 1st District
L.A. Board of Supervisors, 2nd District
L.A. Board of Supervisors, 3rd District
L.A. Board of Supervisors, 4th District
L.A. Board of Supervisors, 5th District
L.A. County Commission on Disabilities
L.A. County Republican Party
L.A. County, Office of Affirmative Action
Los Angeles Democratic Party
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund
NAACP Los Angeles
NAKASEC
NALEO Educational Fund
New America Foundation
New Voter Project
Nexus
Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network
Office of Tonia Reyes Uranga
Organization of Chinese Americans
Policy Advocates, Inc.
Progressive Democrats – Los Angeles
Progressive Democrats – America
Protect California Ballots
Region G L.A. County – CA Democratic
Republican Party Central Committee
RxVote
S. Cal Grassroots
Salvadoran American Leadership Education
San Gabriel Valley Center Democratic Party
Southeast Center for Independent Living
Smith Kaufman LLP Attorneys
Southern California Rehabilitation Services
Speaker's Office of Member Services
Student PIRG – New Voter Project
Study California Ballots.Org
The Tool Shed Group
United Cambodian Community
United Cerebral Palsy
USC The Center for Disability Services
Valley West Democratic Club
Westside Center for Independent Living
Woodland Hills Democratic Club
Jennifer Collins-Foley

Congresswoman Maxine Waters
Constitution Rights Foundation
CSUDH Center for Service
Culver City Democratic Club

Libertarian Party of Los Angeles County
Liberty Hills Foundation
Little Tokyo Service Center

Ferris Gluck
Dick Heiser
Marcy Winograd
Erin Flynn
Michelle Marshburn

Dean Logan

From: Frances Posadas
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2009 11:30 AM
Cc: Dean Logan; Efrain Escobedo
Subject: Technology, Diversity, Democracy The Future of Voting Systems in Los Angeles County

Attachments: Picture (Device Independent Bitmap)



Los Angeles County REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

Technology, Diversity, Democracy

The Future of Voting Systems in Los Angeles County

You are cordially invited to participate in an important and forward thinking discussion.

Special Guests:

Debra Bowen, California Secretary of State
Dean C. Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
Donetta Davidson, Commissioner, U.S. Election Assistance Commission
Dr. Jean-Lou Chameau, President of Caltech
Prof. Charles Stewart III, Co-Director, Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project

Wednesday, September 16, 2009

8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Breakfast and Lunch will be provided

California Institute of Technology
Beckman Institute Auditorium
1200 East California Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91125

With support from:



Los Angeles County
REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

This invitation is for a single admittance. (Space is limited)
Please RSVP by September 11, 2009 to:
email - fposadas@rrcc.lacounty.gov

