



## Legislation Details (With Text)

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## Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Discussion

### SUBJECT:

**DISCUSS CONCERNS BROUGHT UP BY VOTERS DURING THE MARCH 3, 2020 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION (CITY COUNCIL)**

### I. SUMMARY

This staff report is on the agenda at the request of Council member Davis-Holmes.

On March 3, 2020, the County of Los Angeles Registrar Recorder conducted its Statewide Primary election. During the election process the general public expressed concerns related to potential voter disenfranchisement, election equipment malfunctions, long wait times, lack of accommodations for seniors, etc. This item is on the agenda to discuss and identify opportunities and solutions on how the City of Carson may partner with the Registrar Recorder for an improved voting experience in upcoming elections.

### II. RECOMMENDATION

Direct City Manager to draft a letter to the Los Angeles County Registrar Recorder documenting the concerns of the general public and City Council; offering the City's partnership in an effort of improving voters experience in the electoral process.

### **III. ALTERNATIVES**

Provide direction as City Council deems appropriate.

### **IV. BACKGROUND**

The County of Los Angeles implemented its Voting Solutions for All People (VSAP) initiative during the March 3, 2020, Presidential Primary election. In addition to other changes, this was the first time the county offered county-wide voting. Key components to the new voter experience were extended voting periods, deployment of vote centers throughout Los Angeles County, electronic poll books (ePollbooks), interactive sample ballots, and new vote-by-mail ballots.

#### **Vote Centers and Extended Voting Period**

Approximately 1,000 Vote Centers were opened at public buildings, workplaces, places of worship, and shopping centers throughout Los Angeles County to allow voters to cast ballots near their home, work, school, and other locations that were most convenient for them. Voters were also able to register and vote on the same day. In addition, there were 5 locations throughout Los Angeles County open 24-hours during the extended 11-day period to service voters needing accommodation outside of normal business hours.

The Vote Centers were open for up to 11 days prior to March 3, 2020, which included two weekends, for a minimum of 8 hours per day. There were two (2) vote centers in the City of Carson for the 11-day voting period; thirteen (13) were open on Election Day. Every voter received three separate pieces of information in the mail identifying every vote center location and details about how voters may cast a ballot.

#### **ePollbooks and Ballot Marking Devices**

The ePollbooks replaced the printed list of voters at the polling locations, which gave Vote Center staff the ability to verify each voter's registration eligibility in real time and confirm the voter had not already voted at any other voting center or by mail. The ePollbooks was the main component to enabling voters to vote anywhere in Los Angeles county, as any poll location could easily verify voter eligibility and vote status.

The new Ballot Marking Device (BMD) has a modern touchscreen that is not connected to the internet. The BMD allows the voter to select their choices on a touchscreen, print out the paper ballot to allow voters to verify/confirm their selections before casting their physical ballots. Voters also had the option of using the audio ballot interface with a keypad to assist with navigating through the contest. Both written and auditory versions are provided in a variety of languages.

In addition, the County of Los Angeles launched an Interactive Sample Ballot (ISB) to help expedite the voting process. Voters were able to mark their sample ballot on a mobile device or computer at their convenience, and generate a 'Poll Pass' prior to arriving at the

vote center. Once at the vote center, the voter was able to scan the Poll Pass on the BMD to confirm or make changes, prior to casting their ballot.

Election Day issues:

The City received calls from Carson voters related to election equipment malfunctions, extensive wait times at the polling locations, and poor lighting at Annalee Elementary School.

Extensive wait times and long lines at the Vote Centers were not limited to the City of Carson. Vote Centers throughout Los Angeles County experienced this issue. Long wait times were primarily caused by an influx of voters getting to the vote centers during the final hours prior to the close of polls, which exacerbated delays in the voting process.

Another concern was elderly voters not being able to stand for extended periods of time, and staff at the Vote Centers not accommodating those individuals. The County's stated purpose for the Vote Centers was to expedite the voting process, however, on Election Day the experience was quite the contrary. Voters observed other voters leaving the vote center without casting a ballot because they were discouraged by the long lines and delayed waiting period.

The County Registrar Recorder, Dean Logan, stated his office may have underestimated how many voters would use the extended voting period to cast their ballots early. Perhaps deploying more poll workers and poll equipment to the vote centers on Election Day could have accommodated the inflow of voters during the final hours of the voting period and mitigate delays in voting.

On Election Day, City Clerk Gause-Aldana received a call (approx. 6:40pm) from a council member reporting poor lighting at Annalee Elementary. She immediately placed a troubleshoot ticket with the Registrar Recorder. Soon after (approx.. 7:05pm), City Clerk Gause-Aldana received another call from the Recreation Superintendent reporting the same issue; at which time he was informed of the ticket already placed with the County. Given the timeframe the ticket was issued, the lighting matter was not resolved prior to poll closure at 8:00pm.

Tuesday, March 10, 2020, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors conducted a hearing to discuss similar concerns that were made by the general public, city officials and Board of Supervisors. During that meeting, they approved officials to conduct a formal investigation into election irregularities and report back within 45-days with "corrective measures" to ensure similar problems do not occur in the November 2020 General Election.

To that end, the City of Carson has a desire to partner with the County of Los Angeles, the Registrar Recorder, and the general public to address the irregularities and implement corrective measures identified in the report, so that voters (particularly Carson voters) have an improved voter experience in future elections.

Therefore, it is recommended that the City Council direct the City Manager to draft a letter to the Los Angeles Registrar Recorder documenting the concerns addressed during the City Council meeting discussion; offering the City's partnership in an effort to improve the

voters' experience in the electoral process.

## **V. FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

## **VI. EXHIBITS**

None.

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