AGN. NO.

REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND JANICE HAHN

September 12, 2023

Inclusion and Equity: Engagement of Non-English-Speaking/Limited English-Proficient Voters in Los Angeles County

With the upcoming 2024 elections, it is imperative that Los Angeles County (County) take the necessary steps to prepare, support, and engage in efforts to promote equity in voter engagement and increase access for all eligible voters.

This will be especially vital for the non-English speaking (NES) and Limited-English Proficient (LEP) voters in LA County. These voters will require strategic engagement that is culturally competent, but most importantly, communication and information in their preferred language.

With more than half of the population identifying as a person of color, over 30% of the population being foreign-born, and with more than 200 languages spoken—Los Angeles County is truly as diverse as they come. In 2020, 70,000 people, who were registered to vote, responded to a Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) mailer

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asking if they needed non-English voting materials. We can only imagine this need increasing as we continue to educate and engage this community about their right to vote and encourage their civic participation through voting.

Since the passage of a 2006 federal legislation that "extend[ed] the minority language provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965…any County with more than 10,000 residents whose native language is not English and who indicated on their U.S. Census form a lack of proficiency in English, is required to provide election materials in the identified languages…."[1] Currently in the County, the RR/CC is mandated to provide language assistance in the following languages, aside from English:

- Armenian
- Chinese
- Cambodian/Khmer
- Farsi
- Korean
- Spanish
- Tagalog/Filipino
- Vietnamese
- Hindi
- Japanese
- Thai
- Russian
- Bengali*[2]
- Burmese*
- Gujarati*
- Indonesian*
- Mongolian*
- Telugu*

Providing accurate information and ensuring equitable access to voting materials

[1] https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/voter-education/multilingual-services-program/multilingual-services-program

[2] *Some services may not be available for certain languages*

and in-person voting locations will only help to increase trust and voter engagement with this population.

Unfortunately, in the past, unnecessary mistakes were made, such as:

- Korean-speaking voters receiving sample ballots with misprinted information and candidates' names printed "in an order that didn't match the order on mail-in ballots"[3] which impacted ~~over 305,000~~ voters.
- Sufficient vote centers not secured in densely ethnic neighborhood enclaves such as Chinatown or Koreatown until two weeks before the midterm elections and only when the issue was raised by community advocates.[4]

It is incumbent that these lessons are learned and not repeated through comprehensive quality checks and assurances to ensure that the external assets and materials that are being prepared for the NES and LEP voters are accurate in language and order. Mistakes and errors can cause mistrust of a process with the community, specifically the immigrant community, that may already have suspicions about voting and the government.

Utilizing an equity lens towards voting rights, particularly for NES and LEP voters who often come from largely communities of color, such as Latinx, Indigenous and Asian Pacific Islander, …will enhance LA County's commitment to anti-racism, diversity and inclusion.[5] It also means RR/CC must work to identify and invest more resources to

[3] https://westsidetoday.com/2017/03/29/la-county-clerk-attempts-to-calm-concerns-about-misprinted-sample-ballots/
[4] https://laist.com/news/politics/lack-of-polling-places-in-chinatown-and-koreatown-decried-by-asian-american-civil-rights-groups
[5] https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi/

eliminate challenges to voting for NES and LEP voters, such as language, physical and cultural barriers.

To build sustainable relationships and rapport with the non-English speaking community, RR/CC should continue to engage and partner with immigrant advocacy organizations, community groups, faith-based organizations, service providers and relevant County Departments such as the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) to better support the NES and LEP community and voters to increase registration and voting through education and providing information about these topics.

Lastly, following the engagement model of meeting clients "where they are at", RR/CC also needs to take the necessary steps to ensure that in-person voting centers are placed in areas that will increase access for non-English speaking and limited English proficient voters by working with the community and respective providers on identifying and securing sites that will welcome voters.

RR/CC needs to continue to build on strategies to enhance access to voting in an equitable process that promotes diversity and inclusion and that can only happen through collaborative partnerships with the communities we want to assist and with the support of front-line providers and advocacy groups who know these communities well.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk <u>to meet and confer, and provide the Board with a report back, in writing, in 45 days, with the County's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and the Office of Immigrant</u>

Affairs (OIA) on how it will better support the NES and LEP community and voters, using data and strategies, to increase registration and voting through education, outreach, and service delivery; ~~in collaboration with the Directors of the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative and Office of Immigrant Affairs to provide a report back to the Board, in writing, to the Board in 45 days, with an education, engagement, and implementation plan, and any recommendations, to address, but not limited to, the following:~~

a. ~~Increasing the number of in-person voting locations in communities, e.g.: AAPI, Indigenous, Latino…with a high concentration of non-English speaking and limited English proficient voters by reviewing and improving current criteria to ensure equity of placements.~~
b. ~~Reviewing and assessing the rates and compensation to vote centers.~~
c. ~~Recruitment of staff and volunteers to provide in-language support in diverse languages that are relevant to non-English speaking and limited English proficient voters by:~~

~~i. Increasing partnership with immigrant advocacy groups and providers to assist with volunteer recruitment;~~

~~ii. Increasing collaboration with community partners to plan and attend events to inform non-English speaking voters of voting and elections; and~~

~~iii. Reviewing and assessing the stipend rates for those workers who are providing language support for recruitment and retention purposes.~~

d. ~~Enhancing quality check and assurance processes and mechanisms of RR/CC external assets in diverse languages, e.g.: ballots, information, voter guides…to ensure the information is correct and linguistically accurate.~~

e. ~~Working with County Communications, increase partnership with hyperlocal ethnic media to promote information, education, and combat misinformation about the upcoming and future elections in the County.~~

f. ~~Identify mechanisms by which RR/CC will receive feedback from non-English speaking and limited English proficient voters to identify, respond to, and correct any issues or mistakes quickly.~~

g. ~~Identify specific ways in which RR/CC, with support from ARDI, is using an equity framework to adjust its practices.~~

2. Authorize the RR/CC to implement a $100 bilingual per election bonus for all qualifying community and student election workers to support recruitment and placement of multi-lingual speakers at vote centers throughout the 11-day voting period;

3. Direct the RR/CC to continue to recruit staff and volunteers to provide in-language support in diverse languages that are relevant to NES and LEP voters by:

a. Increasing partnerships with immigrant advocacy groups and providers to assist with volunteer recruitment; and

b. Increasing collaborating with community partners to plan and attend events to inform NES and LEP voters on voting and elections;

4. Direct the RR/CC to utilize and expand its existing quarterly Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) to:

a. Create opportunities for the public and impacted communities to share thoughts, suggestions, and recommendations with the LAAC;

b. Review proposed vote center placement plans and criteria—and, to recommend culturally appropriate or preferred in-person voting locations in relevant communities, e.g.: AAPI, Indigenous, Latino…with high concentration of NES and LEP voters;

c. Enhance quality review and assurance checks for multi-lingual materials to ensure the information is accurate and linguistically correct;

d. Identify additional mechanisms by which the RR/CC can receive timely and actionable feedback from NES and LEP voters; and

e. Work with County Communications to increase partnerships with hyperlocal, ethnic media to promote information, education, and combat misinformation about the upcoming and future elections in the County;

5. Direct the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk to provide the Board with a post-election report, in writing, within 90 days, following the certification of the March 2024 Presidential Primary and November 2024 Presidential General Elections, ~~after the election~~, ~~of~~ on how ~~non-English speaking~~ NES and LEP

voters were supported, the effectiveness of the incentivized recruitment and placement of multi-lingual election workers, and opportunities or recommendations for further ~~lessons learned, and opportunities for~~ growth and success with this community.

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