



Butte County Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters Election Administration Plan (COVID-19)

Election Code § 4005(a)(10)(I)
Senate Bill 423

Hall of Records
155 Nelson Avenue
Oroville, CA 95965

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www.ButteVotes.net

Updated: August 27, 2020

Voter's Choice Act Adjustments Pursuant to SB423 in Response to COVID-19

Given the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), Butte County proposes the following accommodations to the County's current Election Administration Plan order to safely and securely provide voters in Butte County with in-person voting opportunities. The new procedures and action plan for the County's elections will be in place for the November 3, 2020 General Election in order to comply with mandates from the legislature, Governor, and local healthcare officials.

In-Person Voting Patterns

The March 3, 2020 Primary Election was the first election conducted under VCA in Butte County and will serve as our benchmark for this analysis. In that election we saw the highest voter turnout in a Butte County Primary since California changed the primary rules in 2000.

Vote By Mail

This wildly successful model saw greater than 58% turnout with 67,539 voters participating. All but 3,795 of those voters voted by mail without requiring assistance at an in-person voting location. In total, 97.59% of Butte County voters cast their ballot by mail. The voters who made use of the Voter Assistance Centers did so in a very condensed fashion. In fact, 40.6% of the in-person voters arrived on the day of the Election at just four of our centers creating long lines. Voters did not make use of the early voting locations (some of which were open 11 days). This pattern meant many of our more remote locations went unused. One such remote location only served 56 voters across the span of four days (1.5 voters/hour). The new plan provides for reallocation of resources to accommodate voting patterns.

We are confident, through our continued voter education and outreach, that the demand for in-person voting opportunities will remain low. Butte County has a strong history of voting by mail and we expect those trends to grow stronger.

Location Scarcity

Butte County, a community still rebuilding from the devastating Camp Fire, is limited on the number of locations available for Voter Assistance Centers. In March, we were able to secure 13 locations, including our office. Due to the current COVID-19 crisis the following locations are not sufficient for use as Voter Assistance Centers:

1. The Terraces – as a senior living facility, using this location would pose a significant risk to the health of the residents.
2. Gridley Veterans Memorial Hall – this facility has been temporarily lost due to water damage that cannot be repaired in time for the November election.
3. Paradise Pines Ownership Association – this facility is geographically isolated such that network connectivity is poor/non-existent. Additionally, it is too small to accommodate social distancing guidelines.
4. Durham Veterans Memorial Hall – the location in Durham suffers from network connectivity issues due to the makeup of the old concrete building. We have also been made aware of a scheduling conflict with the facility.
5. Palermo Union School District – this location is in a sparsely populated area and features relatively low square footage. In lieu of placing a voter assistance center here, the district has agreed to host a ballot drop box.

6. Oroville Golf and Event Center – the golf and event center is located in an area of the county with a strong history of voting by mail which lead to very low traffic in the March Presidential Primary. Additionally, the network connectivity at the facility is poor/inconsistent.
7. Our Divine Savior Catholic Church – this location was too small to accommodate social distancing guidelines.
8. Terry Ashe Recreation Center – this location was used because the Veterans Memorial Hall (located next door) was damaged in the Camp Fire. However, the Center is too small to accommodate social distancing.

Solution

Butte County proposes the deployment of 13 Voter Assistance Center boards, which exceeds our requirements under Election Code Section 4005 (active voter registration is approximately 116,000). However, to accommodate voting behaviors, location scarcity, and the current pandemic, these 13 voter assistance center boards will be deployed to nine locations. These locations are large enough to allow for social distancing. The additional resources that would otherwise be used in other locations, including accessible ballot marking devices, will be deployed to our centers that experienced the highest demand to allow us to quickly and efficiently assist voters and prevent long lines. Four of our locations will feature two voter assistance centers in a single location. We are calling these locations “super voter assistance centers”. All voter assistance centers will be open starting three days before the election pursuant to Senate Bill 423 (SB 423).

Two of our centers (Bell Memorial Union and Silver Dollar Fairgrounds) have been moved to larger rooms/buildings on site to accommodate the “super voter assistance center” layout.

We have also taken advantage of the new permissions allowed by SB 423, with respect to Election Code Section 12288, to find locations that were not considered for previous elections. These include the Elk’s Lodge and Luna Room in Chico.

Increased staffing will also allow some personnel to be dedicated to assisting voters with the Conditional Voter Registration process, including increased bi-lingual support.

To further expedite the in-person voting experience, each Voter Assistance Center will feature an exterior drop box available during the hours of operation so voters who just need to drop off a ballot will not need to wait in line or enter the facility to do so.

Additional Actions to Protect Voters

Ballot Drop Boxes

In addition to the reallocation of resources, the county is purchasing additional ballot drop boxes to provide voters who do not wish to mail their ballot with safe, secure and accessible alternative ballot return opportunities.

Two such ballot drop boxes will be available 24 hours a day in a drive-thru set up. An additional ten boxes will be external walk-up drop boxes available 24 hours a day. Four drop boxes will be traditional interior boxes available during regular business hours. This brings our total to 16 ballot drop boxes in the county, which exceeds the mandated requirement (8).

Language Assistance

We have also considered the needs of our language minority groups in drafting our plan. Under the VCA model, we provided language assistance hotlines at all 13 of our Voter Assistance Centers capable of providing services in Spanish, Hmong and American Sign Language. However, despite advertising the availability of this system, it was not requested or used once by a voter in the March 3, 2020 Primary Election. This service will be available again for the November 3, 2020 General Election at each of our voter assistance centers and we will continue to produce voter outreach materials in all required languages. Given the lack of voter demand for these services, we are confident that a reduction in locations will not adversely affect voters who may not speak English fluently.

Voters With Disabilities

Butte County has had Remote Accessible Vote by Mail options in place since the March 3, 2020 Primary Election. Our team has put on several outreach events with local organizations that provide services to voters with disabilities. We will continue to provide this service to our voters in addition to purchasing additional accessible ballot marking devices.

We have partnered with local agencies to provide transportation to and from the Voter Assistance Centers, should a voter need transportation to reach an in-person voting site.

Young Voters and Those Without a History of Vote By Mail

Through our knowledge of the County and our voters, paired with statistics from the March 3, 2020 Primary Election, we know where our younger voters and voters who are less likely to vote by mail reside and where they will go to seek services. We have used our traffic at voter assistance centers and volume of provisional and conditional voter registrations to strategically place our “super voter assistance centers” to best suit the needs of our community. Our highest density of young voters and those without a history of voting by mail is located in the areas around Chico State and neighborhoods in south Chico. Using this information, we placed super voter assistance centers at the Silver Dollar Fairgrounds and Chico State campus.

Health and Safety

The County is currently working with the Secretary of State’s office regarding procurement of personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies. These will include masks, gloves, face shields, sneeze guards, hand sanitizer and sanitary wipes. We will also have thermometers to do temperature checks for all of our election workers.

Butte County plans to increase staffing at the voter assistance centers. Some of this staffing will be responsible for helping voters understand the voting procedures under COVID-19, assist in distribution of personal protective equipment when needed, and to help ensure social distancing is observed.

The centers have been redesigned to allow quick and efficient services to voters while maintaining social distancing, one-way entrances and exits, and other safety precautions.

Super Voter Assistance Centers*

Silver Dollar Fairgrounds
2357 Fair St
Chico, CA 95928

Masonic Family Center
1110 W. East Ave
Chico, CA 95926

Bell Memorial Union @ CSU, Chico
400 W. 1st St
Chico, CA 95929

Southside Community Center
2959 Lower Wyandotte Rd
Oroville, CA 95966

Voter Assistance Centers

Butte County Fairgrounds
199 E Hazel St
Gridley, CA 95948

Paradise Veteran's Memorial Hall
6550 Skyway
Paradise, CA 95969

The Luna Room @ Sol Mexican Grill
3269 Esplanade
Chico, CA 95973

Elk's Lodge
1705 Manzanita Ave
Chico, CA 95926

Hall of Records
155 Nelson Ave
Oroville, CA 95965

*Locations with two Voter Assistance Centers
-Each location will have an external ballot drop
box

Ballot Drop Box Locations

Hall of Records**
155 Nelson Ave
Oroville, CA 95965

Employment and Social Services**
765 East Ave
Chico, CA 95926

CSU, Chico*
400 W. 1st St
Chico, CA 95929

Butte County Library – Paradise*
5922 Clark Rd
Paradise, CA 95969

Butte County Library – Chico*
1108 Sherman Ave
Chico, CA 95926

Butte County Library – Oroville*
1820 Mitchell Ave
Oroville, CA 95966

Butte County Library – Durham*
2545 Durham-Dayton Hwy
Durham, CA 95938

Butte County Library – Gridley*
299 Spruce St
Gridley, CA 95948

Chapman Elementary School*
1071 East 16th St
Chico, CA 95928

Palermo Union School District*
7390 Bulldog Way
Palermo, CA 95968

Paradise Town Hall*
5555 Skyway
Paradise, CA 95969

Biggs City Hall*
465 C St
Biggs, CA 95917

Gridley City Hall
685 Kentucky St
Gridley, CA 95948

Oroville City Hall
1735 Montgomery St
Oroville, CA 95965

Chico City Hall
411 Main St
Chico, CA 95928

Hmong Cultural Center
1940 Feather River Blvd, Ste H
Oroville, CA 95965

* 24-hr external drop box

**24-hr external drop box with drive-up access