

2017 Summary of Accomplishments

About FoCE

Future of California Elections (FoCE) is a statewide network of elections officials, reform advocates, and civil rights and civic engagement organizations. FoCE members work individually and collectively to advance shared goals and priorities at the state and local level.

FoCE projects are characterized by the FoCE model of collaboration which brings the unique perspective of each FoCE member and the facilitation expertise of FoCE staff.

The FoCE model of collaboration looks at an issue from the various viewpoints of elections including administration and the needs of traditionally underrepresented voters. This comprehensive lens of elections issues makes the FoCE model a dynamic and effective approach for strengthening California's democracy.

This document is a summary of selected accomplishments.

FoCE member participation is listed alphabetically. For a full list of FoCE members and partners visit www.futureofcaelections.org

Voter Registration

FoCE members worked to increase voter registration opportunities for eligible voters across the state by working with state agencies to streamline the voter registration process and increase voter education of new policies.

- Improved the in-person voter registration process in 100 percent of DMV field offices by advising the Office of the California Secretary of State and the California Department of Motor Vehicles. The next stage of this work will be to advise on the implementation of California's automated voter registration process in 2018. This effort was led by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of California, and includes participation by Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles (AAAJ-LA), California Common Cause, Disability Rights California (DRC), the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund (LWVCEF), the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund and additional partners.
- Advanced voter registration opportunities on college campuses through the California Students Vote Project by working with the University of California and the California State University systems to uphold their 2016 commitments to this goal. Two new community college districts made similar commitments this year and the new Chancellor of the community college system is encouraging all community college districts to collaborate with the California Students Vote Project. The California Students Vote Project is led by Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus (AAAJ-ALC) and CALPIRG.
- Developed a plain language messaging brochure to reduce voter confusion of conditional voter registration, also known as Same Day Registration. This messaging will be used for outreach in the 2018 election cycle. FoCE staff led this workgroup which included the ACLU, AAAJ-ALC, the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) and the Center for Civic Design with input from all FoCE members.
- Improved online access to voter registration and mail voter registration information to over 100,000 consumers of the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services, bringing the agency into compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). The ACLU spearheaded this effort and also provided summer training to nearly 100 office supervisors and worked with the agency to update NVRA policies.

- Increased compliance of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) by identifying improvement to the online systems at the Social Security Office and at the Department of Social Services Statewide Automated Welfare System, monitoring Covered California, and coordinating monitoring of other government agencies covered by the NVRA. This effort was led by the ACLU of California and Disability Rights California.
- Expanded voter registration opportunities for youth by working with the Office of the Secretary of State to incorporate pre-registration into its third-party online voter registration Application Programming Interface (API) and promoted system enhancements with co-branded graphics. This effort was led by Rock the Vote.
- Engaged school educators and community groups in a webinar presentation of *Path to the Polls*, an original research report on best practices for pre-registration by CALPIRG and NALEO Educational Fund.
- Increased plain language and readability of California’s new voter registration card by providing input as the Office of the Secretary of State developed the new card. FoCE staff led this effort.

Voting Experience

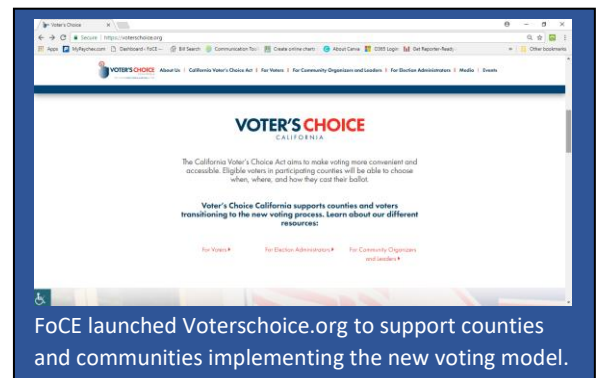
FoCE members worked to improve the voter experience for all of California’s diverse voters by creating alternative formats for voter information and serving on local and state advisory boards.

- Continued [Voter’s Edge California](#), an online voter guide in English and Spanish, which hosted 36 local elections across 15 election dates. This effort is led by LWVCEF and partner Maplight.
- Engaged young voters through issue-based video guides in Los Angeles and Modesto, which had over 8,000 views with viewers spending approximately 4 minutes on the guides. The video guides were developed by Rock the Vote, NALEO Educational Fund and CALPIRG.
- Served on state and local advisory committees for language access and for voters with disabilities providing recommendations on how to improve the voting experience for voters. FoCE members serve statewide on several committees. Additionally, the ACLU developed a [toolkit](#) on how to establish a local advisory committee on language access and Disability Rights California developed two publications on voter accessibility advisory committees, one tailored for [counties](#) and one for [voters](#).
- Advanced civic engagement of youth through California Common Cause’s 7th Annual Student Activist Training which brought together 15 college students from across the state.

Election Administration

FoCE members worked to implement California’s new law, the Voter’s Choice Act (VCA), which allows selected counties to change their voting model in 2018 by sending every voter a vote-by-mail ballot and providing three options for returning the ballot: by mail, at a drop box or at a vote center. FoCE members also worked to improve language access in election administration and evaluated election funding.

- Established Voter’s Choice California, a statewide network to support the five counties implementing the VCA: Madera, Napa, Nevada, Sacramento, and San Mateo. The Voter’s Choice network is led by FoCE staff and a steering committee and includes local hubs in each of the implementing counties, and a statewide coalition of partners.
- Launched the Voter’s Choice California [website](#) with education tools for voters, resources for elections officials and an interactive events calendar to promote engagement in the VCA implementation for local communities. The website is maintained by FoCE staff.
- Administered the Voter’s Choice California grants program, regranteeing over \$300,000 to support VCA implementation. FoCE staff will fundraise and hopes to administer this grants program again in 2020.



- Worked closely with community organizations and elections officials in the five VCA counties to establish local hubs, offer trainings, technical assistance, and develop educational materials on the Voter’s Choice Act. This effort was led by VCA steering committee members ACLU, AAAJ-ALC, AAAJ-LA, CACEO, California Common Cause, DRC, LWVECF and NALEO Educational Fund. California Voter Foundation and Rock the Vote are participating locally in the county hubs.
- Advised on statewide implementation of the Voter’s Choice Act as part of the Secretary of State’s VCA Taskforce.
- Developed a VCA legal digest and checklist to facilitate compliance with the statute and also a VCA Comprehensive Checklist, a resource allowing advocates and voters to perform in-depth reviews of the Election Administration Plans. Both of these documents were authored by the LWVECF.
- Improved language access laws at the state level thanks to completion of the [Voices of Democracy Report](#), the most comprehensive examination of language access in California elections, completed by AAAJ-ALC and AAAJ-LA.
- Worked with the Office of the California Secretary of State to improve the data and the process used to identify the minority language communities that are eligible to receive the language access protections in the State Elections Code. This work, led by AAAJ-ALC, AAAJ-LA and the ACLU, resulted in eight new minority language communities eligible for these protections starting in 2018.
- Completed a comprehensive study of vote-by-mail rejection rates of Asian American voters which resulted in an [issue brief](#) developed by AAAJ-LA. The brief will inform voter education strategies for Asian American voters.
- Developed an [Election Funding and Governance Proposal](#) through a working group convened by the California Voter Foundation over the course of a year with FoCE members and partners, seeking to establish a funding formula in state law where the state pays 50 percent of counties' local election costs and counties provide greater consistency in voters' services statewide.

Annual Conference

- Convened over 250 participants and 52 speakers which included a cross-section of county elections offices, state agencies, civil rights organizations, advocates for effective government, and community organizations. Participants described the conference as a valuable learning experience on the latest developments in California elections and a majority of participants would attend the conference again in the future.
- Used the FoCE model of collaboration to develop the conference program and provide diverse perspectives on all the panels. The 2018 Conference Planning Committee included California Common Cause, NALEO Educational Fund, Santa Cruz County, and Verified Voting.
- Created opportunities to network with new colleagues and create cross sector partnerships.



FoCE conference panels are structured to include diverse perspectives from election officials and community organizations.

FoCE Adjacent Projects

The FoCE model of collaboration resulted in deeply forged partnerships. FoCE members and partners often work together to further California’s democracy in additional areas beyond the FoCE priorities.

- AAAJ-LA, California Common Cause, Disability Rights California, NALEO Educational Fund, Verified Voting and FoCE partner, Center for Civic Design sat on Los Angeles County’s VSAP working group and advised on the development of a new voting system for Los Angeles County to ensure it was accessible for voters with disabilities and limited English proficient voters.

- The ACLU on behalf of the state Language Accessibility Advisory Committee, conducted a statewide assessment of language assistance programs at the county level. The state LAAC and FoCE partners will use this information to provide additional training and capacity building in language access in 2018.
- AAAJ-ALC and AAAJ-LA wrote and led a statewide coalition behind AB 918 (Bonta), which dramatically improved the language assistance available to limited-English speaking California voters and makes California the nationwide leader in ensuring no voter is disenfranchised because of lack of English skills.
- AAAJ-ALC, AAAJ-LA and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) are representing voters in the *Higgins v. Becerra* lawsuit that challenges the constitutionality of the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 (“CVRA”). The civil rights organizations aim to uphold the constitutionality of the CVRA to ensure that minority voters that have had their votes diluted by at-large election systems used in local jurisdictions have the ability to convert those jurisdictions from at-large election systems to alternative election systems that do not dilute their voting strength.
- The ACLU, California Common Cause and the LWVCEF are pursuing a lawsuit to compel the DMV and the Office of the California Secretary of State to fully comply with the requirement to incorporate voter registration into mail renewal forms. This change has the potential to touch over 1 million eligible Californians who renew their driver license and identification card by mail each year.

Acknowledgements

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Contact Information

Future of California Elections
1000 N. Alameda Street, Suite 240
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 346-3274

info@futureofcaelection.org

www.futureofcaelections.org

 @FutureCAElect

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