

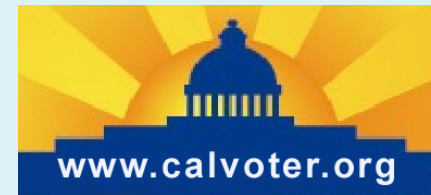


Online Voter Lookup Tools: Opportunities and Best Practices

**Presented by
Kim Alexander
California Voter Foundation**

**Future of California Elections Conference
March 3, 2014, Los Angeles, CA**

About the California Voter Foundation



Mission:

Through research, oversight, outreach and demonstration projects to improve the election process so that it better serves the needs and interests of voters.

Three key goals:

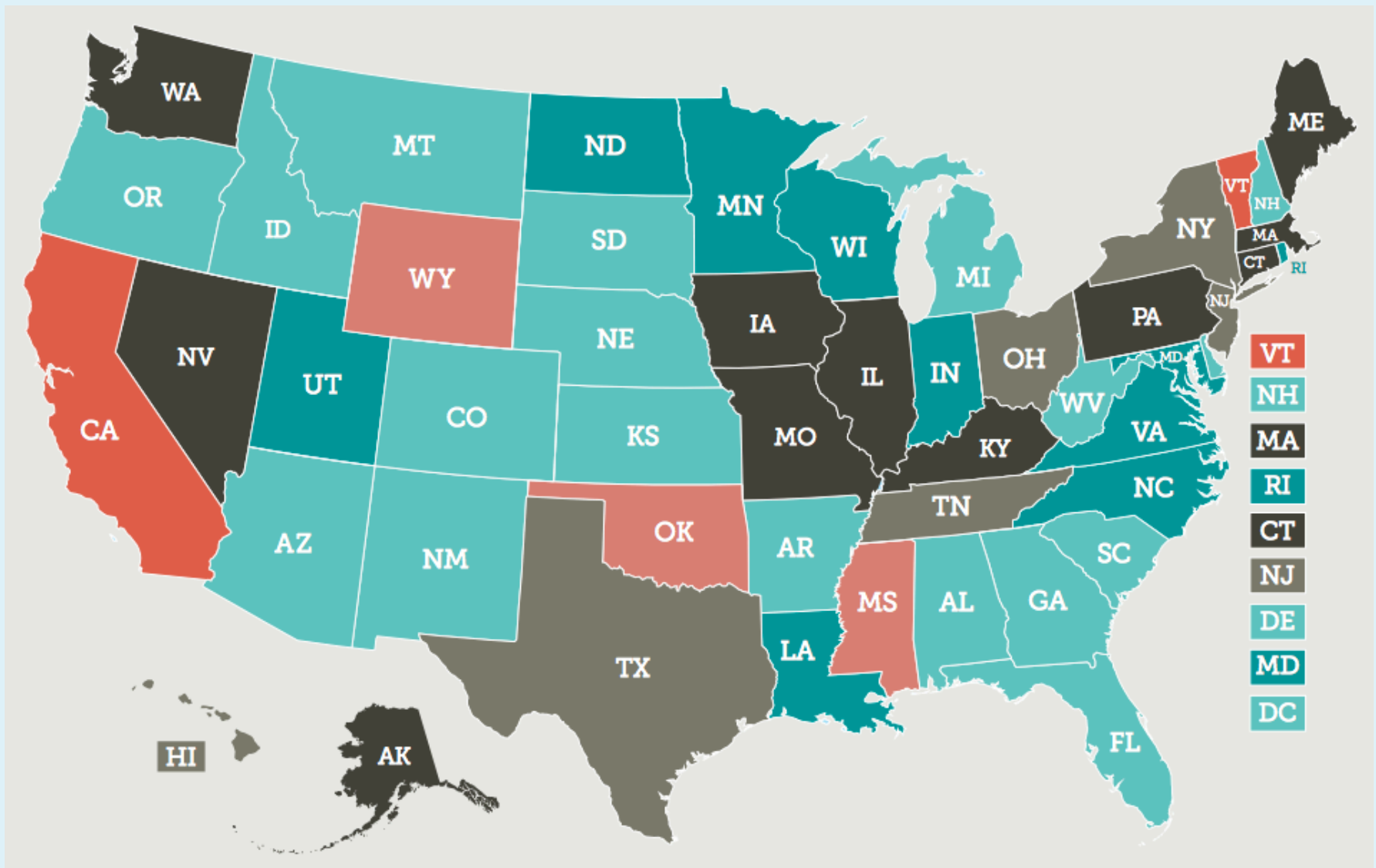
1. Assess the California voting process to identify needed improvements
2. Modernize California voter registration to facilitate greater participation
3. Improve disclosure of financial interests in initiative campaigns to help voters make informed choices.

What Are Online Voter Lookup Tools?

They provide voters with 24/7 access to key information to help them vote, such as:

- **Check registration status/address**
- **Personalized ballot information/sample ballot**
- **Absentee ballot status (ballot transmission/receipt)**
- **Locating polling place**
- **Provisional ballot status**

California is one of only two states with no statewide lookup tools:



Pew 2012 research found polling place tools were those most frequently offered by states:

BY THE NUMBERS

48

States (and the District of Columbia) that offered a **polling place lookup tool**.

40

States (and the District of Columbia) that provided the opportunity to view their **registration status**.

32

States (and the District of Columbia) that allowed users to view the status of their **absentee ballot**.

19

States (and the District of Columbia) that allowed users to view the status of their **provisional ballot**.

25

States that provided **sample ballot lookup tools**.

Why the delay in California lookup tools?

- Lookup tools started to become available after the Help America Vote Act of 2002 was enacted and states were required to create and maintain statewide voter registration databases to improve election administration.
- Lookup tools were an unanticipated but welcome by-product of HAVA, as state election agencies realized they could save staff time and costs while also expanding access to information by making it available online.
- California's development of a new statewide voter registration database, called VoteCal, was late to begin as the Secretary of State initially asked the Department of Justice to allow the existing database to be deemed "HAVA-compliant". VoteCal was further set back after the first contract was cancelled in 2010.

Voter Use of Lookup Tools:

A 2011 national poll of registered voters conducted for the Pew Center on the States by the Mellman group found that:

- A majority (57%) said they looked up what was on their ballot before voting most recently
- Almost half sought out where to vote (45%) and voting hours (44%)
- About a third (30 percent) verified that they were officially registered

In California, many counties offer lookup tools

Of California's 58 counties:

- 31 offer Voter Registration Status lookups
- 45 offer Vote-by-Mail status lookups
- 21 offer Ballot Information lookups
- 28 offer Polling Place lookups

Tools tend to be offered by more populous counties; close to 20 percent of CA eligible voters live in counties with no voter registration status lookup tool

- **Counties with all four lookup tools (reg status, VBM status, sample ballot and polling place):**

***Alameda Los Angeles Madera Marin Monterey
Orange Placer Sacramento San Diego
San Francisco San Mateo Santa Clara Shasta
Solano Sonoma Ventura***

- **Counties with three lookup tools:**

***Colusa El Dorado Kern Napa San Bernardino
San Joaquin Stanislaus Yolo***

- ***Counties with two lookup tools:***


**Calaveras Contra Costa Glenn Humboldt Kings Merced
Riverside San Luis Obispo Santa Barbara Santa Cruz
Sutter Yuba**

- **Counties with one lookup tool:**

**Amador Butte Imperial Inyo Lake Lassen
Mendocino Mono Nevada San Benito
Tehama Tulare Tuolumne**

- **Counties with no lookup tools:**

***Alpine Del Norte Fresno Mariposa Modoc
Plumas Sierra Siskiyou Trinity***



www.calvoter.org

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California Voter Foundation

County Election Offices

County election offices are responsible for managing elections in California.

Contact your county election office for answers to questions about registration status, sample ballots, polling place locations and voting by mail. If you do not know which county you live in, use the [League of California Cities' web site](#) (search by city name) or the [US Census Bureau web site](#) (search by zip code).

Many California counties provide online tools that let voters look up their registration status, Vote-by-Mail ballot status, polling place location and sample ballot. Where available these tools are linked below. Also available is Google's [Polling Place Lookup](#) and the League of Women Voter's [SmartVoter](#). County election offices are typically open for in-person or phone assistance on weekdays during business hours; some offer expanded hours during election times.

- [Alameda County](#)
Tim Dupuis, Registrar of Voters
1225 Fallon Street, Room G-1
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-272-6973
online voter lookup: [registration status](#) | [vote-by-mail ballot status](#) | [sample ballot](#) | [polling place](#)
- [Alpine County](#)
Barbara Howard, County Clerk
99 Water Street
PO Box 158
Markleeville, CA 96120
Phone: 530-694-2281
Email: coclerk@alpinecountyca.com
online voter lookup: [registration status](#) | [vote-by-mail ballot status](#) | [sample ballot](#) | [polling place](#)
- [Amador County](#)
Kimberly L. Grady, County Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters
810 Court St.
Jackson, CA 95642
Phone: 209-223-6465
Email: Elections@co.amador.ca.us
online voter lookup: [registration status](#) | [vote-by-mail ballot status](#) | [sample ballot](#) | [polling place](#)

Legend:


Registration Status Lookup Tool

Yes	counties	31
No	counties	27



Other Ways Counties Can Offer Voters Online Lookup tools:


[Simplified Mobile Version](#)



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- Contact Us

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Find Your Own Election (For [select locations](#))

Look up information about all contests and candidates on your ballot and where you vote. Address information is kept [confidential](#) and *only* used to identify election districts.

Street Address:

Zip Code:

Election Date:

Browse All Elections on Smart Voter

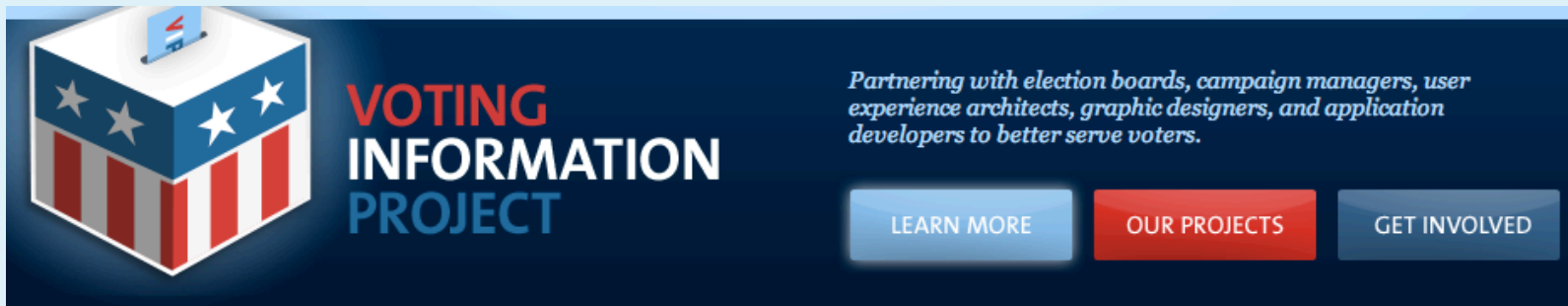
Smart Voter offers comprehensive coverage of the recent and upcoming elections below. You can also [find results after each election.](#)

DATE	JURISDICTION
Dec 3, 2013	CA: Special election for Los Angeles county
Feb 4, 2014	CA: Special election for Alameda county (Piedmont)
Feb 11	CA: Special election for San Diego county
Mar 4	CA: Special election in Los Angeles county

County Participation in SmartVoter, 2012 & 2013

- 21 California counties participated in SmartVoter during regularly held 2013 local elections. Another seven counties participated in SmartVoter for the 2012 general election, for a **total of 28 participating counties during 2012-2013.**
- Those participating in full (both ballot info and polling place lookup): Alameda, Butte, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Humboldt, Kern, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Ventura (18 counties).
- Those participating in part (ballot info only): Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Placer, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz. (10 counties)

Another Opportunity: Pew's Voting Information Project



Learn More

The Voting Information Project (VIP) offers cutting edge technology tools to provide voters with access to customized election information to help them navigate the voting process and cast an informed vote. VIP works with election officials across the nation to ensure this information is official and reliable. We answer voters' basic questions like "Where is my polling place?" "What's on my ballot?" and "How do I navigate the voting process?"

VIP uses an open format to make data available and accessible, bringing 21st century technology to our elections and ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to cast an informed vote. Check out [Our Projects](#) to see what we're up to.

Background/ Our History

In October 2008, "Being Online is Not Enough," a 50-state analysis of election websites produced by the Pew Charitable Trusts in partnership with Nielsen Norman Group, found that 120 million people went online in search of answers to their questions about the general election, yet no standardized, reliable source existed for voters to obtain basic Election Day information. The report found that providing on demand access to voting information not only helps voters, but saves governments money by reducing phone calls



VOTING INFORMATION PROJECT

Partnering with election boards, campaign managers, user experience architects, graphic designers, and application developers to better serve voters.

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Google Voter Information Tool

Version: 1.2

f Like 45

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VIP teamed up with Google to create an open-source polling place lookup tool that integrates Google Maps and VIP data feeds to help voters find their polling place. Voters can input their home address and see a map of their polling place. The tool uses data from government officials and Google Maps to produce the most accurate and official results. Click for instructions on how to install the tool on your site.

In 2010, the Find My Polling Place gadget helped voters locate their polling place on over 320 websites which embedded gadget. These included a wide range of major news outlets, political campaigns, official state election websites and non-profits. Analytics reported that the gadget was viewed more than 12 million times in the days leading up to Election Day 2010.



Project Status

Complete!

Embed the tool



Other Ways Counties Can Add Lookup Tools:

- 1. Talk with your Election Management System vendor. They already have the infrastructure you need to be able to provide these tools**
- 2. Ask another county for help – a county that has your same EMS and has already set up lookup tools may be willing to assist (Call Gail Pellerin!)**
- 3. Participate in opportunities provided by the Secretary of State**

**For counties that already have lookup tools,
consider potential improvements:**

*Review messaging displayed when your site
responds to a query:*

- **Is it in language that will make sense to the voter?**
- **Does it provide a phone number and/or email address the voter can use to contact the office with follow-up questions?**

For counties that already have lookup tools, consider potential improvements:

Ensure relevant information is added as soon as possible so the voter can take action if necessary (ex: vote-by-mail ballot status)

Add voting history and other details (but make sure information will be securely accessed only by the specific voter)

Make address specific information accessible by address lookup up (polling place and sample ballot)

Example: Santa Cruz County, Before and After

Vote By Mail Ballot Status Lookup ht

Vote by Mail Ballot Status Lookup
Enter your birth date: (mm/dd/yyyy)

Enter last 4 digits of your driver's license number; if that fails, try the last 4 digits of your social security number:

You have 1 Ballot Issued.

Ballot 1

Ballot Return Date: 06/03/2013
Ballot Return Status: The returned ballot is good.

Thank You.

Example: Santa Cruz County, Before and After

Election Information Display

<http://amiregistered.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/>

Voter Registration Search for Santa Cruz - Am I Registered to Vote?

Enter your birthdate:
MM/DD/YYYY

01/19

Enter the last four digits of
your CA driver's license
number. If you do not have a
driver's license, enter the last 4
digits of your social security
number.

1234

Search

Gail Louise Pellerin

Mailing Address:

Santa Cruz CA 95060

Age: 51
Precinct: 50522
Status: Active

Registration Date: 07/17/2012
Election Officer: No
Vote by Mail Status: Not a 'Vote by Mail' voter
Political Party Preference:

Voting History:

11/06/2012 - Presidential General
06/05/2012 - Presidential Primary
11/02/2010 - Gubernatorial General
08/17/2010 - Special General Election
06/22/2010 - Special Primary Election
06/08/2010 - Statewide Direct Primary Election
05/19/2009 - Special Statewide
11/04/2008 - Presidential General Election
06/03/2008 - California Primary Election
02/05/2008 - Presidential Primary Election
11/07/2006 - General Election
06/06/2006 - Gubernatorial Primary Election
11/08/2005 - Special Statewide Election
11/02/2004 - Presidential General Election
03/02/2004 - Presidential Primary Election
10/07/2003 - Statewide Special Election
11/05/2002 - Gubernatorial General Election
03/05/2002 - Gubernatorial Primary Election

Make sure they are mobile-phone friendly

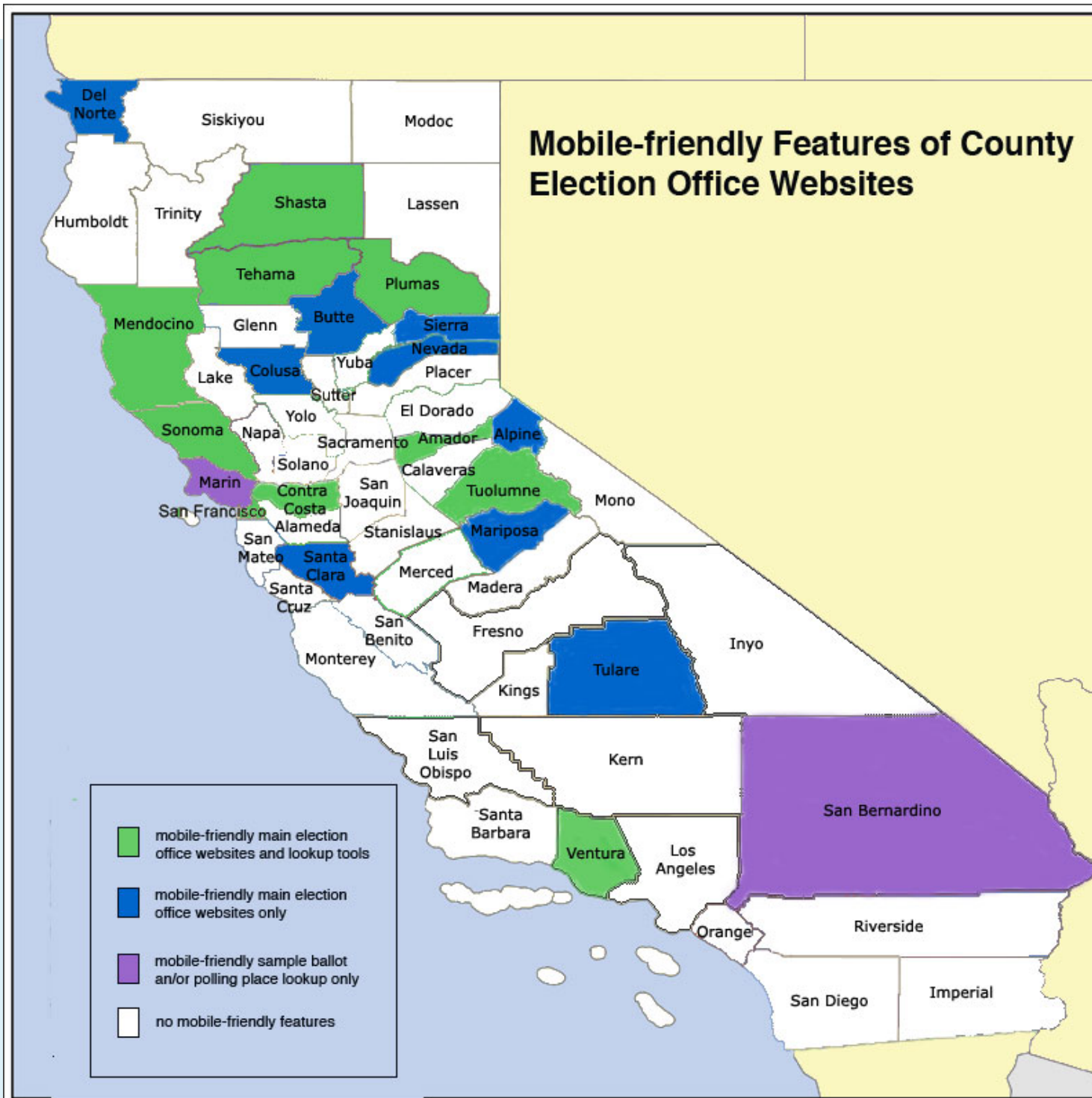
CVF tested all county web sites and lookup tools in February 2014. Our research found that:

In nine counties both the web sites and all lookup tools were found to be mobile-phone friendly:

Amador, Contra Costa, Mendocino, Plumas, Shasta, Sonoma, Tehama, Tuolumne, and Ventura.

San Francisco's site is mobile-phone friendly but two of its lookup tools – registration and VBM status – were not.

Mobile-friendly Features of County Election Office Websites



Examples of risky practices:

Allowing the public to access sensitive personal information about voters online:

- Georgia's lookup tool requires a user to enter the initial of their first name, last name, county, and birth date. The return screen displays that voter's registration status, along with his or her full name, full street address, gender, race, registration date and absentee ballot status.

MVP

Georgia Secretary of State Brian P. Kemp

My Voter Page

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Welcome To MVP

My Voter Page

Use the MVP Log In to check your:

- Voter registration status
- Mail-In application and ballot status
- Poll Location
- Early Voting Locations
- Elected Officials
- Registration information on file with the county office
- Sample ballot for the upcoming election

Not registered to vote?

[Click here](#) for forms and information on how to register.

MVP Log In**Your Name and County:**First Initial: Last Name: County: **Your Birthday:**Month: Day: Year: (please enter 4 digits)

Voter Information	Your Polling Place for State & County Elections
<p>C SAXBY CHAMBLISS 27 CHEROKEE RD MOULTRIE, GA 31768 Race: W Gender: M Status: ACTIVE Registration Date: 03/14/1997</p> <p>Click here to change your address</p>	<p>Precinct 0002 TOMMY MEREDITH GYM 1100 11TH AVE SW MOULTRIE, GA Click here for map & directions to polling place <small>NOTE: Non-specific rural addresses may not be available (Maps courtesy of MapQuest. The Secretary of State's Office is not responsible for inaccurate mapping and directions. Please contact MapQuest regarding erroneous information.)</small> Election Day precinct hours are 7:00 am - 7:00 pm</p> <p>Click here for municipal polling place</p>
<p align="center">Absentee Ballot Request Information</p> <p align="center">If you prefer to vote off-site, mail or fax your absentee ballot application to your county registrar.</p> <p align="center">Click Here for an Absentee Ballot Application</p> <p align="center">Click here for early voting locations and times</p>	
<p align="center">Ballot information is currently unavailable</p>	
<p align="center">Your Qualified Candidates</p>	
<p>Officials Elected Statewide</p>	<p>U.S. Congress: District District 008 Congressional District Maps</p> <p>Georgia Senate: District 11 Georgia House: District 172</p>
<p>Please Note: Polling places are subject to change. Always check your designated polling place location via this website prior to going to vote.</p> <p>Newly Registered Voters: Please review your registration date which is located under your name and address above. You must be registered on or before the established deadlines to vote in upcoming elections. Please view the current election calendar to confirm the first election in which you will be eligible to vote.</p>	

CVF 2004 study of California voter participation barriers and incentives:

Nearly one in four eligible nonvoters said one reason they were not registered to vote is because they want to keep their personal information private.

This was about the same percent who said they weren't registered because they did not want to get called for jury duty.

Best Practices/Tips:

- **When providing voter look-up tools, avoid returning more personal information than was entered by the user (assume third parties other than the user will access these tools).**
- **Make sure voter registration status search return screens include instructions for updating or correcting the data displayed.**
- **Allow users to access polling place and ballot information by street address, and provide a sample address that can be used to try out these tools.**

Best Practices/Tips:

- **Move lookup tools that require sensitive voter information to secure servers.**
- **Make sure lookup tools in VoteCal will be fully functional and accessible (election eligibility lookup tool)**
- **Provide in languages other than English**
- **Make sure they are user friendly for users with disabilities**

For more information:

Kim Alexander, California Voter Foundation

kimalex@calvoter.org, 916-441-2494

on Twitter @ kimalex3



<http://www.calvoter.org/issues/votprivacy>