

— SAN MATEO COUNTY —
CALIFORNIA VOTER'S CHOICE ACT
SUPPLEMENT TO JANUARY 2020 – JANUARY 2024
ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PLAN
FOR THE NOVEMBER 3, 2020 GENERAL ELECTION



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OFFICE OF
**ASSESSOR-COUNTY CLERK-
RECORDER & ELECTIONS**
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

MARK CHURCH
CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER &
ASSESSOR-COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER

September 17, 2020

Dear Fellow Voters,

This supplement to the San Mateo County [Election Administration Plan](#) (EAP) for the period January 2020 through January 2024, contains plans specific to the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election. A supplement was required to address changes to our EAP, necessary due to the unusual and unprecedented circumstances of holding an election during a worldwide pandemic. Quite unlike the November 5, 1918 midterm elections, when voter turnout nationally was lower than previous midterm elections due to a second wave of the Spanish flu, we expect record turnout locally for this election despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The next pages will direct you to the legislation and state guidance we will follow for the November election.

If you takeaway one message, let it be that San Mateo County voters will have the election services they have come to expect in a safe, secure and convenient manner.

San Mateo County was one of the first counties in the state to implement Vote by Mail (VBM) elections in 2018 under the [California Voter's Choice Act](#), and this will be our fifth election under the Voter's Choice Act. It is our standard procedure to automatically mail all registered voters a VBM ballot with an "I Voted" sticker and a postage-paid return envelope. Every voter is given the opportunity to cast their ballot in the convenience and safety of their own home, which is especially important in this COVID-19 environment.

If you prefer to vote in-person, 45 Vote Centers will be available. Three Vote Centers will be open for early voting on October 5. There will be numerous safety precautions in place to protect the health and safety of voters and staff. We will provide staff with personal protective equipment and provide voters with disposable items to minimize multiple contacts between voters. Commonly shared items and surfaces, such as the Ballot Marking Tablets and voting booths, will be cleaned between voters. These new routines will likely result in increased wait times for voters on Election Day.

A new option for most voters is the ability to cast their ballots through our Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) system. RAVBM allows voters to use any computer with access to the internet and a printer to mark their selections and print their ballot. San Mateo County was the first county in the state to deploy an Accessible Vote by Mail system in 2017. It was developed to assist voters with disabilities, and overseas and military voters. Information on how to access the RAVBM system is on our website, www.smcvote.org, and will be in both your Sample Ballot & Voter Information Pamphlet and your Official Ballot packet.

No matter the method of voting you prefer, I encourage you to vote, and I encourage you to vote early

Sincerely,

Mark Church

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Overview of Election Changes

The San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division will follow changes to the California Elections Code mandated for the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election under the provisions of [Assembly Bill 860](#) and [Senate Bill 423](#). We will also follow the [Election Administration Guidance under COVID-19](#) (revised 8/27/2020) by the Secretary of State, any additional revisions to the guidance, and implement health and safety practices at our Vote Centers designed to keep voters and staff safe in accordance with state and county public health orders.

For public health and safety, each Vote Center will be assigned a Health Ambassador/Greeter to ask voters to wear a face mask, answer questions on protective practices and remind voters to follow the markers to maintain physical distancing. Vote Centers will have plexiglass shields in place at check-in tables to allow staff to assist voters without physical distancing.

New to San Mateo County under Assembly Bill 860:

- Provide universal access to our Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) system.¹
- Extend the deadline to receive Vote by Mail ballots postmarked on Election Day to the 17th day after Election Day.²
- Processing of Vote by Mail ballots may begin on the 29th day before the election.³

Assembly Bill 860 requires counties to provide voters with a ballot tracking system for all Vote by Mail ballots. San Mateo County voters will continue to be able to verify when their ballot is received, and when it is counted, through our web site at [My Election Info](#). Voters may also sign-up for the vote-by-mail ballot tracking system, [Where's My Ballot?](#), provided by the Secretary of State.

While [Senate Bill 423](#) authorizes counties to not have its vote centers open before the 3rd day prior to the November 3, 2020, statewide general election, San Mateo County will continue its practice of opening three vote centers 29 days before the election.

In May 2020, the Secretary of State's office added new state-mandated languages under [Elections Code \(EC\) 14201](#), language minority determinations. Three of those languages have been added to San Mateo County's required languages: Burmese, Hindi and Japanese. San Mateo County will provide and display facsimile ballots in these languages, and education and outreach for them.

¹ RAVBM system was created for voters with disabilities, voters living overseas or with the military and/or a military family member.

² Under current law, the deadline for receipt of a ballot postmarked by Election Day is three days following.

³ Under current law, counties can begin processing vote-by-mail ballots 10 business days before an election. Results will still not be released until after all polls close on Election night.

Safe Voting Options

San Mateo County is prepared to hold the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election safely during these extraordinarily challenging times.

Vote Centers

The Registration & Elections Division began planning modifications to procedures and for Vote Centers in March 2020 to comply with CDC and County health standards in response to COVID-19.

We will have [45 Vote Centers this election conveniently located throughout the county](#). Vote Centers have been specifically sited to ensure maximum size to ensure adequate physical distancing between voters and staff.

Voter Center Representatives (VCRs) will receive both online training and in-person training (in training rooms reconfigured to allow physical distancing between people). While the main roles of VCRs have previously been to check-in voters, provide printed ballots or cards for voters to use the Ballot Marking Devices, VCRs will now also receive training on cleaning and disinfecting requirements. Vote Center staff will be increased to allow coverage for these additional responsibilities.

VCRs will be given guidance on the use of personal protective equipment (such as face masks and gloves). They will also be made aware of the exemptions to wearing face coverings⁴ so as not to deny the fundamental right to vote to anyone for not wearing a face mask if that person is complying with the guidance. A voter not able to wear a mask may be asked to vote outside or wait for other voters to leave to provide additional distance between this person and other voters.

Vote Center workers will continue to receive training on the purpose of the facsimile copies of the ballots and how to provide a facsimile ballot, when requested by a voter. Training will include information on the new languages added since the March election.

Signs for translated reference ballots in all languages serviced by the county will be updated with the three new required languages, Burmese, Hindi and Japanese.

We encourage all voters to vote early to avoid the lines on Election Day.

Vote by Mail

As one of the first five counties to implement the California Voter's Choice Act in 2018, San Mateo County is well-positioned to send all our registered voters [Vote by Mail ballots](#). Voters then have the option to return their ballot in the mail, use one of our Official Drop Boxes or bring their ballot to a Vote Center. We have [36 Drop Box Locations this election](#), an increase from 33 in the Primary Election, providing voters more convenient options to return their voted ballot.

Ballot Printing

The Registration & Elections Division has worked with K&H Election Services, one of the largest ballot printers in the country for more than 12 years, and with them, we are prepared to produce more than 427,000 ballots to be mailed to San Mateo County's registered voters.

⁴ See [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) Face Covering Guidance](#)

Ballot Mailing

Prior to each election, the Registration & Elections Division meets with staff from the United States Postal Service (USPS) to provide advance information on mailing dates, anticipated quantities and review any changes implemented by USPS.

San Mateo County has an excellent working relationship with USPS, and we work together throughout the election season to get ballots out and back in a timely fashion.

Voters can track their ballots through the Secretary of State's [BallotTrax service](#). Voters can receive automated alerts via text message, email or phone call on the status of your Vote by Mail ballot every step of the way by subscribing to "Where's My Ballot?" at [Wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](#).

Replacement Ballots

While voters may request replacement ballots to be mailed to them through October 27 or go to any Vote Center to pick up one, for this election, to reduce wait times, voters may request a replacement ballot for pickup before visiting a Vote Center. Voters will find a request form on our website, [www.smcvote.org](#) or can call/text 650.312.5222 one day before pickup, to submit a request and select a location for pickup. Once their ballot is ready for pickup, they will receive an email with location-specific instructions.

Remote Accessible Vote by Mail

For this November's election, all voters can use the [Remote Accessible Vote by Mail \(RAVBM\) system](#) to safely access, mark and print their ballot from any computer with internet access and a printer. This service has been a voting option for voters with disabilities to receive and mark their ballots independently and securely. It has also provided overseas voters and military voters with a way to vote in a timely fashion. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, this service has been expanded to all voters to make voting as easy and accessible as possible. Marked ballots must be returned to the Registrations & Elections Division via mail or Drop Box; local voters cannot return their ballots via email or fax.⁵

Ballot Drop Boxes

Beginning October 5, voters will have access to 36 Ballot Drop Box locations conveniently located throughout the county. Twenty-nine Drop Box locations are outdoors, making them accessible 24/7. Every box is secure, with indoor boxes containing security locks and fastening cables, and outdoor boxes being made of steel and bolted in-place into concrete.

Teams of two will empty each drop box twice a week between October 5 and October 25, three times a week from October 26 to October 30, and at least twice a day on Election Day. Collected ballots are returned to the Registration & Elections Division for processing and secure long-term storage.

Ballot Counting

The Registration & Elections Division has the staffing and technology in place to ensure ballots are tallied accurately and efficiently. The Division replaced its tabulation system in 2019, and staff has had the opportunity to use the new equipment for the November 5, 2019 Consolidated Municipal, School and Special District Election and the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election. The new equipment allows us to process up to 50,000 Vote by Mail envelopes per hour.

⁵ Military and overseas voters should refer to the [Federal Voting Assistance Program](#) for additional ballot return options.

Voter Education & Outreach

An election held during a pandemic can only be successful if voters are aware of their voting options and rights, and they are confident that voting is safe, secure and without barriers.

Effective education and outreach are achieved when information is delivered by a “trusted messenger”. Studies show that government agencies, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, and advisory committees serve as trusted messengers on election matters, which is why we will continue our collaborative outreach network to connect with voters.

Voter Workshops

The Registration & Elections Division will hold online workshops with community partners in place of in-person workshops due to COVID-19.

Workshops in September and October 2020 will be given to inform language communities and voters with disabilities of the upcoming changes to voting for the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election. Planning is in process at the time of this publication.

Text Messages to Reach Voters

In the absence of community events, the Registration & Elections Division will send text messages to reach an estimated 25,000 young voters, area residents who are eligible to vote but not registered and inactive voters.

The Division will cross-reference young voters, first-time voters and inactive voters in its database with mobile phone numbers in Political Data’s database. Up to three text messages will be sent to encourage young voters and first-time voters to vote. Messages will be sent by individuals working for TextSurge.

TextSurge will obtain information to contact county residents, over eighteen years old, in our lower registration/turnout areas (Daly City, East Palo Alto and unincorporated areas) to provide information on registering to vote. The Division will cross-reference the names and other identifying information obtained by TextSurge with its database to confirm the person is not currently registered to vote.

Finally, the Division will cross-reference inactive voters in the same lower registration/turnout areas with mobile numbers from Political Data to inform them they will not receive ballots in the mail from San Mateo County unless they contact the Division if they have not moved or they re-register to vote.

Postcard Targeting Areas with Lower than Average Registration

In addition to text messaging potential voters missed due to the lack of community events, the Registration & Elections Division will mail a letter-size postcard with registration information in four languages to nearly 100,000 households. The postcards will be delivered via USPS Every Door Direct Mail in parts of Daly City, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Redwood City, San Bruno, South San Francisco and unincorporated areas.

Summary of Changes to the Election Administration Plan 2020 – 2024 Appendix

Proposed Vote Center Locations

The Elections Division will increase the number of Vote Centers from 42 during the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election to 45 for the November 3 election.

There will be no Vote Centers opening 11 days prior to Election Day.

In addition to three new Vote Center locations, several locations have changed to allow room to maintain physical distancing and create one-way traffic patterns. Vote Center locations which changed aimed to remain within the general proximity of previously used locations

Plans are underway for the acquisition of two new self-contained Mobile Vote Centers. Locations and schedules are being determined at time of publication.

Ballot Drop Box Locations

We have increased the number of outdoor 24/7 locations from nine in March to 29 for November.

Vote Center layouts

New sample have been developed for use in larger rooms to allow for social distancing and where possible, one-way traffic flow.

Community Partners

We are pleased to add three additional community-based organizations to our community partner section.

Community Events Calendar

All in-person public-facing events were cancelled in the wake of COVID-19 following the March 3 election. Five virtual events are currently scheduled.

Media Partners

Seven media partners have been added.

Example: Direct Voter Contact

Postcard 1 included the table on the Vote Center dates, number open and hours as voters have come to expect. Information on COVID-19 preparedness and availability of RAVBM to all voters was added.

Postcard 2 and 3 will also add information on our COVID-19 preparedness and availability of RAVBM to all voters.