



You choose **when, where, and how** to vote  
A Project of Future of California Elections

## Sample Election Official Responses to Frequently Asked Questions

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Below are some of the most common questions about the VCA we have heard from voters and community leaders in our outreach efforts and in diverse focus groups around the state.

Every election official will answer these questions differently based on their own perspectives, electorates, and processes. Before holding public meetings, we suggest you consider your answers to each of these questions. To get you started, we've prepared some basic responses you can adapt for your purposes.

Note, the responses below aim to express the perspectives of election officials. The VCC has also prepared a more general FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), which is available on our [website](#) and as a [handout](#) for public distribution.

### 1. Why are we switching to this new process?

The Voter's Choice Act gives voters more options so they can choose when, where, and how they vote. By adopting the VCA, state lawmakers and election officials are hoping to increase voter turnout by making voting more convenient.

### 2. How will the new voting process work?

Every registered voter will receive a ballot in the mail one month before the election. Voters will have three options: (1) return their ballot by mail postmarked no later than Election Day, (2) place it in one of the secure dropboxes located throughout their county, or (3) vote in person at a vote center.

At vote centers—which will replace polling places—you can drop off your ballot or request a replacement ballot and vote in person. You also may register to vote and cast a ballot the same day. Professional staff will be trained to support all voters, including those with disabilities and those who may need language assistance. All vote centers will be open from the Saturday before Election Day through Election Day

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at 8 p.m. Some will be open a full 11 days, including the two weekends before Election Day.

**3. Will vote centers be open on the weekends?**

Yes. All vote centers will be open the weekend before Election Day, and some will be open for two weekends.

**4. What if I lose my ballot or make a mistake?**

You can visit a vote center and request a replacement ballot.

**5. What is a dropbox?**

A dropbox is a secure, locked structure where voters may deliver their ballots from the time they receive them by mail up to 8 p.m. on Election Day. Election officials will place dropboxes in convenient, accessible locations, including places close to public transportation routes. Voters are encouraged to recommend potential dropbox locations to election officials.

**6. Can I vote at any vote center?**

All eligible [insert county] voters can cast their ballot at any vote center in our county. If you are eligible but not yet registered to vote in [insert county], you can register at any vote center in the county and vote the same day. [insert county] voters also can return their ballot to any dropbox in the county.

**7. Why can't we use my polling place?**

In some cases, former polling places will be used as vote centers. However, many former polling places will no longer be in use. Polling places under the VCA must be available for 4 to 11 days and meet other requirements. Many traditional polling places may not be available, accessible or meet other requirements under the VCA.

**8. What if I've moved since the last time I registered to vote?**

You might not receive a ballot in the mail, but you may still vote. Visit any vote center in your county to register at your new address and vote.

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**9. What if I'm not registered to vote?**

You will not receive a ballot in the mail, but if you are [eligible to vote](#), you may still do so. Visit any vote center in your county to register and vote the same day.

**10. How will the vote centers look and feel?**

Vote centers will be well-organized, professional, and accommodate voters with disabilities. [Add details that reflect your plans locally.]

Note: In focus groups, voters frequently ask this question and indicate they worry vote centers will feel like unfriendly, faceless bureaucracies.

**11. Who decides where the vote centers and dropboxes will be located? What are the criteria?**

The county elections office will decide where to place vote centers and drop boxes based on [14 criteria](#) outlined in state law. These include considering where the population lives, access to public transit and parking, how frequently a community votes by mail, and accessibility for people with disabilities. We also must consider which sites are available for up to 11 continuous days of voting. As we make these decisions, we want to hear from a wide variety of people within our diverse county so we ensure every community has access to the polls.

**12. Will vote centers be accessible to people with disabilities?**

Yes, all vote centers will be accessible to people with disabilities. Counties participating in the VCA also are required to create a Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) if they do not have one already. A VAAC is comprised of voters with disabilities and is integral during the planning process to make voting accessible in the transition to a vote center model. Please let us know if you are interested in joining the VAAC.

**13. What about voters who speak languages other than English? Will they be able to use the vote centers?**

Yes, vote centers will accommodate voters with limited English proficiency. We will have well-trained staff at every location prepared to support voters with translated voting materials in languages required by law. To the greatest extent possible, we aim to have multilingual staff and volunteers available to help voters at vote centers.

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**14. I don't have a car. How will I get to a vote center?**

We are committed to making vote centers accessible by public transit, and the law requires it. When choosing vote center locations, we will use data on bus and train routes as well as input from community members. We want to hear from you where you think it would be most convenient for those using public transportation to vote. Additionally, all voters have the options of returning their ballots by mail or in the dropboxes we will place throughout the county. You also can help us determine where to place dropboxes, such as near community centers and transit lines.

**15. Are there going to be long lines at the vote centers?**

Lines at vote centers are not expected to be long. In fact, they may be shorter than lines at current polling places because voting will be spread over many more days. In our planning, we will consider factors that affect wait times, such as the length of the ballot and the types of equipment we are using. We also expect that many new features of vote centers will speed up the process. For example, we plan to use computers to check people in instead of paper registration rolls.

**16. Who made the decision to switch to this new process?**

State legislators and the Secretary of State designed the Voter's Choice Act with extensive input from community groups that represented a wide range of California voters. Our office carefully considered the VCA and decided it was a good fit for our county because [insert your top reasons such as "it gives voters more flexibility" or "it will save our taxpayers money"]. Before deciding, we consulted many voters and community leaders. We are committed to continuing to involve the public as we work out key details like where to place vote centers.

**17. Will this make it harder for me to vote in person?**

Most voters will have to travel farther than in previous elections to reach a vote center where they can vote in person. However, in many other respects, the law makes it easier to vote:

- You get to choose when you vote. Vote centers will be open four to 11 days, including on the weekends.

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- You can vote at any vote center in our county, which means you can vote where you work, where you go to school, or where you run errands.
- You will be supported by well-trained professional staff.
- You can register to vote or update your registration at a vote center.
- You will automatically receive a vote-by-mail ballot and can use it to vote any time in the month before the election.

**18. Is this an attempt to disenfranchise voters?**

No. In fact, the VCA may increase voter turnout. The law is modeled after a similar program in Colorado. When Colorado made the switch, voter turnout increased quite a bit. We hope the same happens here. Still, it is very important that we make sure voters know about the new system. That's why we're excited to work with you and other residents to get the word out in all of our communities.

**19. Why can't I vote close to home?**

The toughest adjustment is going to be the transition away from traditional, neighborhood polling places. But we think the trade-off is worth it given all we will gain: more voting days, the flexibility to vote anywhere in the county, automatic vote-by-mail ballots, more accessible options for people with disabilities, and more.

**20. Why will I be mailed a vote-by-mail ballot when I didn't ask for one?**

State lawmakers designed the Voter's Choice Act to increase voter turnout and make voting more convenient. One convenience for voters in participating counties is no longer needing to request a vote-by-mail ballot. If you don't want to vote by mail, you may visit a vote center and ask to vote in person.

**21. Will I need to show photo identification at the vote center?**

California voters are not required to show identification at their polling place. However, if you are a newly registered voter, you may be asked to show identification the first time you vote, per federal law. Acceptable forms of identification include a copy of a recent utility bill, the sample ballot booklet you received from your county elections office, or another document sent to you by a government agency. Other examples include your passport, driver license, official California identification card, or student identification card. For more information on

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identification to use when you vote for the first time check [the complete list](#) or call the Secretary of State's toll-free voter hotline at (800) 345-VOTE (8683). Please note that every individual has the right to cast a provisional ballot even if he or she does not provide documentation.

## 22. Could this make it easier for people to commit voter fraud?

No. The Voter's Choice Act vastly improves protections against potential voter fraud:

- When a voter uses a vote center, we will verify in the statewide voter database that no other votes have been cast by that voter.
- The VCA nearly eliminates the need for provisional ballots, which also enhances security.
- The process will likely increase the use of vote-by-mail, which requires voters' signatures to match official records.
- Voters' signatures at vote centers will be captured electronically and compared to records in the event of a challenge to their eligibility.
- Vote centers will be staffed by trained professionals with strong knowledge of the law and proper voting procedures.
- The Voter's Choice Act requires the use of new voting equipment with enhanced security standards.

## 23. Will the dropboxes be secure?

Yes. Dropboxes must be secure and locked. We expect ours to ... [describe planned features such as how they will be constructed, whether there will be video surveillance, etc.]

## 24. Will the Voter's Choice Act cost taxpayers more money?

Some counties will need additional resources to purchase new equipment necessary to participate in the Voter's Choice Act, such as secure dropboxes. But over time, counties should save a considerable amount of money because we will need to purchase and maintain far fewer voting machines. We estimate it will save us \_\_\_\_\_ in the first year and \_\_\_\_\_ in subsequent years.

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**25. How might the Voter's Choice Act affect political campaigns?**

The Voter's Choice Act will improve the capacity of campaigns to target and track voters:

- All voters will receive vote-by-mail ballots at the same time, enabling greater predictability and consistency in campaign calendars.
- Campaigns will be able to access real-time data from vote centers to learn who has cast their ballots.
- The Voter's Choice Act should nearly eliminate the use of provisional ballots, which will provide campaigns with more visible data on voter patterns and behavior.
- With fewer sites reporting and few provisional ballots, participating counties should be able to provide election results more quickly.

**26. How can people submit feedback or opinions on election plans?**

[Outline your county's specific plans.]

**27. How are people going to find out about the change?**

- [Outline key elements of your plan such as:] We will contact each voter directly—such as by mailing a postcard—at least twice. We will aim to generate stories in local newspapers and other media outlets, including ethnic media. We will participate in community events and send information to local organizations to share with their members.
- We are eager to learn from community members specific ways we can reach voters. Are there particular events we should hold, organizations we should contact, or listservs where we should send messages? Who are the influential leaders in your community we can ask to talk about the new system or send social media messages? Where and how does your community receive information?

**28. Where can people get information? Where can I get flyers and other materials?**

We will contact each voter at least twice to ensure they know about the changes.

Voters can also learn about the new system:

- On **our website**: [list URL]

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- **Secretary of State Alex Padilla's website:**  
<http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voters-choice-act/>
- Or at **Voter's Choice California**, a coalition of community-based organizations which has fact sheets and many other materials you can use to engage and educate your community: [www.voterschoice.org](http://www.voterschoice.org)

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