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Little Hoover Commission on Voter Participation Follow Up Questions

June 9, 2017

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Disability Rights California (DRC) appreciated the opportunity to testify at the hearing. Tamar Lazarus via email asked DRC to provide answers to commissioners' follow up questions.

California Counties that have a VAAC

The commission asked for a list of counties with a Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC), a community-based committee that partners local county elections officials with voters with disabilities. For most counties, it is optional to form a VAAC even though VAACs are a best practice for accessibility and recommended by the Secretary of State. Only counties that are opting into the Voter's Choice Act are currently required to form a VAAC.

Counties with VAACs

Alameda County
Contra Costa County
El Dorado County
Los Angeles County
Marin County
Placer County

Riverside County
San Bernardino County
San Diego County
San Francisco County
San Luis Obispo County
Santa Clara County¹
Santa Barbara County
Santa Cruz County
Shasta County
Tehama County²
Sonoma County
Ventura County
San Mateo County

Recently formed VAACs Because of the Voter's Choice Act

Calaveras County
Inyo County
Orange County

For VAACs to be successful, it is important to have consistent meetings and community participation. Santa Cruz County and Los Angeles County both have long-running VAACs and should serve as an example to other counties. DRC is committed to helping to make VAACs thrive. We have created toolkits for both voters looking to join a VAAC and county election officials forming VAACs. We also try, where possible, to send DRC staff to attend and participate in VAAC meetings.

DMV Timeline for AB 1461 Implementation

The Commission has asked for DRC's comments on the Department of Motor Vehicles' (DMV's) proposed implementation plans for AB 1461. Representatives from the DMV and Department of Transportation testified at the hearing that the DMV would implement AB 1461 by April 2018 and bring on the California Department of Technology (CDT) to manage the project. In order to register more Californians with disabilities to vote, DRC

¹ Neither the VAAC in San Luis Obispo nor Santa Clara Counties meet on a regular basis

² Tehama County and Shasta County share a VAAC. DRC does not recommended this as a best practice however this is preferable to not having a VAAC at all.

wants AB 1461 to be implemented as soon as possible, but April 2018 seems like a reasonable time frame considering the lack of progress the DMV has made since AB 1461 passed in 2015. DRC understands that there have been many factors outside of the DMV's control. However, as we discussed in our written and oral testimony, the DMV's planning thus far has done little to assure an expedient implementation process or future accessibility for customers with disabilities.

If the project experiences delays it risks being implemented during the June election season. April 2018 should be firm deadline. There are only about 200 work days until April 2018. April 2018 can likely be a realistic implementation date because the project will have outside management, a digital accessibility consultant, and relatively modest changes to field offices.

DRC believes it is a good step to bring on the CDT. In written testimony and from many other groups, the commission heard a great deal about the DMV's delays in implementing change. DRC does not have experience working with the CDT however it seems prudent at this point to provide the DMV with outside management of this project.

DRC applauds the decision to hire an outside digital accessibility consultant and appreciates that the DMV acknowledged our suggestions. In April, DRC sent a letter to the DMV and Secretary of State advising on how to make technology improvements at field offices accessible and how other large organizations have made technology improvements accessible, including hiring digital accessibility consultants. Incorporating accessibility from the outset will help streamline the process. Accessibility should not be an excuse for delay.

Based on the DMV and Department of Transportation testimony it seems that the DMV will be using a mix of systems: keeping the current touchscreen and paper forms, but also adding the option to fill out the forms ahead of time on a personal computer, or using a kiosk at the field office. Ideally, the mix of systems will allow a variety of ways for customers with disabilities to privately and independently register to vote. Customers can fill out the forms ahead of time on their computer. This is good because customers with disabilities could use their home computers and familiar assistive technology. The kiosks will need to be accessible and it seems that there will only be one in the lobby. The kiosk, if accessible, would allow

people with disabilities to be able to avoid using touchscreen terminals, which lack accessibility functions.

DRC recognizes that it is logistically challenging to implement changes at the over 170 DMV field offices statewide. Our work pushing the DMV to improve voter registration has provided insights into the challenges faced by field technicians. In addition to hiring a digital accessibility consultant, CDT should consult field technicians or DMV staff with recent field technician experience for opinions on implementation and what training is needed to allow them to fulfill the DMV's voter registration requirements. Field technicians directly interact with the public. They need the infrastructure and training that will allow them to effectively assist all customers with voter registration, including those with disabilities.

Thank you for allowing DRC to provide additional comments on implementation. April 2018 seems like a reasonable deadline and implementation should occur without delay. DRC believes AB 1461 has the unique power to improve voter registration opportunities for Californians with disabilities since almost all Californians access DMV services.