



Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

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Testimony to Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments

Senate Oversight Hearing on Election Administration Funding

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Good afternoon Chairman Allen and members of the Committee. I am Dean Logan, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk for the County of Los Angeles. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of today's conversation on the funding of election administration. I sincerely appreciate your continued focus and leadership on this important topic.

An election administration process that ensures the integrity, accessibility and security of our right to vote is a fundamental obligation of our participatory form of governing. As such, it is important that the administration of elections in our state is properly funded and supported. Traditionally, discussions around the funding of election administration have been parsed out – often with a focus on one-time expenditures for the acquisition of voting equipment separate and apart from the operational costs and infrastructure to support the process. Today, I want to encourage us to approach the funding of election administration more holistically recognizing the elements of people, process and infrastructure. Each of those elements contributes to the overall costs of elections administration and each is dependent on a sizeable investment of public funds that are, for the most part, provided at the local level.

History at the federal and the state levels has shown that an adequate funding structure for modernizing the voting experience in California cannot solely focus on equipment and technology needs. The voter-focused (or people) elements like community education and engagement; adequate staffing resources and structure; and empowerment tools must be included in and funded as we consider redesigning the processes, options, facilities and equipment used to administer elections. Failure to incorporate and address these core elements of election administration has contributed to the

decline and instability of the systems in place today – and has deflated the return on investment from past funding efforts.

In Los Angeles County, efforts to modernize and replace our aging voting systems and infrastructure have been stymied by a limited commercial market, regulatory instability and the sheer demographics of a jurisdiction that serves the largest and most diverse electorate in the country. Faced with those constraints, we have engaged in a process of developing a new voter experience for the county's 4.9 million voters -- a number that is expected to increase to 6 million by 2020 with the implementation of Assembly Bill 1461. This new voter experience completely re-envisioned the mechanics of how we vote and is being designed based first on the needs and preferences of our voters and then on the administrative impacts on our operations.

To learn about voter needs and preferences, we have engaged over 3,200 voters in a human-centered design process that has included extensive user testing and prototyping. More than an equipment replacement initiative, we are looking for solutions that respond to the expectations, behaviors and needs of our voters. Rather than replicating the traditional single day, single location, single device voting model, our new voting experience design includes:

- an interactive sample ballot that allows for customized interaction using a voter's personal device;
- deployment of electronic rosters that allow for real time updating of voter history and activity;
- vote centers available on dates, times and in locations convenient and accessible to a mobile electorate;
- accessible Ballot Marking Devices serving all voters – including those with disabilities or language assistance needs – that produce human-readable and auditable paper ballots; and
- a new, secure, transparent and robust ballot counting and vote tabulation system.

With the proper support and regulatory framework, the implementation of this new voting experience will address an outdated, overly complex and costly election model and replace an aging voting system that is no longer aligned with the lifestyles, preferences and habits of Los Angeles County voters – and, that increasingly makes voting inaccessible and inconvenient.

To date, the research and development of this new model and the technology needed to support it has

been funded through partnerships, grants, county general fund appropriations and federal funding allocated by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA 301). In order to fully implement and administer elections using this new model, the County will need significant support to ensure that all elements – people, process and infrastructure – are set up to ensure success. While HAVA 301 and Voting Modernization Bond Act (Prop 41) funding is allocated and available to address equipment and technology, that funding is insufficient for addressing the broader election administration, voter education and engagement, and core infrastructure needs to support those new systems.

While we are breaking ground with this innovative project to re-envision the voting experience in Los Angeles County, we are not the only ones questioning whether the traditional voting model still suits the needs of voters. Our research revealed recognition throughout the country that the current election process is inaccessible and inconvenient. This finding was validated in a report by the Presidential Commission on Election Administration and a recent study by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University. We are encouraged by the growing body of work to improve the usability and accessibility of elections – and we are working closely with the Secretary of State and the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to modernize and streamline the certification and testing processes to support open source, publicly owned voting systems.

Recent legislative initiatives – in particular, Senate Bill 450, which seeks to modify and expand voting options in California, offer the parallel regulatory framework needed to improve the voter experience and make it more accessible. It is important to recognize that these changes reinforce and influence the need to adequately fund elections administration. SB450 seeks to empower California counties to implement a new model of election administration that closely aligns to the work we have been doing in Los Angeles County. The model includes vote centers and early voting along with significant expansion of vote by mail.

While there is good indication that, in the long run, this new model will result in lower election administration costs, the upfront implementation costs anticipated are significant and the more compelling outcome is found in the impact the model has on voter participation. Funds will be needed for the acquisition of new technology, equipment and infrastructure; enhancements to the state's central voter registration database; process development and training; adequate facilities; revised staffing structures and extensive voter outreach and education. That is why, in terms of fiscal responsibility, this conversation and the hard work of detailing the best manner of rolling out the new model are critically important to the significant public investment that will be required to do this right.

Once voting systems, electronic rosters and other technologies are implemented, they will need to be maintained. Software will need to be updated; depreciated hardware will need to be replaced. We cannot continue to manage voting systems outside of the larger technological ecosystem. Technology is evolving at a rapid pace; our technological advancements will have a definitive life span. Likewise, we will need the agility to respond to changes in voter behavior over time. We, as election administrators, need a sustainable funding framework to update and replace voting system components as they reach the end of life. Otherwise, we will see a repeated pattern of our current condition where counties need to replace their voting systems all at the same time and under a condition of urgency.

It is important that we keep exploring ways to make the voting experience more accessible, relevant and reliable for our voters. We must ensure that the method in which we administer elections is not a barrier to voter participation – and that as the culture and behavior of civic engagement evolve, the election process responds to encourage participation and cultivate confidence. Adequately funding the administration of elections is critically important if we are to maintain the integrity and ensure the accessibility of the voting franchise.

Again, I thank you and Secretary of State Padilla for your leadership and collaboration in addressing this important issue and your unwavering support of the elections process in California.