




Memorandum

To: Elections Commission
From: John Arntz, Director 
Date: November 13, 2020
RE: Director's Report: November 18, 2020, Elections Commission Meeting

Following is a brief listing of the work and related information in which the Department of Elections (Department) has been engaged since the previous report issued in relation to the Elections Commission meeting on October 21, 2020.

I. The Department continues to conduct post-election activities associated with the November 3 election.

- A. While the Department is yet to certify the results of the November 3, 2020 election, the preliminary voting statistics are as follows: 448,485 voters or 86.07% of San Francisco's 521,099 registered voters cast their vote in the November election. 7.36% of voters voted at the polls (this total includes voters who cast provisional ballots), while 78.7% voted by mail or during the 29-day early voting period.
- i. To ensure election transparency, to date, the Department issued 12 preliminary election results reports and ballot processing updates associated with the November 3 election.
- B. To date, the Department processed nearly 413,000 returned vote-by-mail ballots. Of those, nearly 412,000 are accepted, and approximately 1,300 are challenged. As authorized under Assembly Bill 860 that made several amendments to the California Elections Code, the Department will continue counting vote-by-mail ballots received in the mail up until November 20, so long as ballots are postmarked or dated on or before Election Day.
- i. Of the total challenged ballots, approximately 500 ballots are challenged due to being postmarked after Election Day and cannot be remedied by voters; the other 800 ballots are awaiting voters' actions as per notices issued by the Department.
 - ii. To date, 820 voters have successfully resolved issues with their challenged vote-by-mail ballots. The Department has been contacting voters with challenged ballots using several methods. First, the Department mails a bilingual cure form, generally within one working day of challenging the ballot, regarding the challenge and actions the voter must take to allow the Department to count the ballot, and a postage-paid return envelope. Second, the Department provides a notification to voters with challenged ballots via the Department's online Voter Portal, which offers a digital version of the cure form. Finally, if the voter has an email address or telephone number on file, the Department attempts to contact the voter by email and/or telephone, also within one working day of challenging the ballot. The Department will continue to notify voters how to cure their challenged ballots until 2 days before the election certification.
 - iii. The Department will scan and attach all returned cure forms to records of voters to be used for signature comparison purposes in future elections.
- C. To date, the Department processed nearly 6,600 provisional ballots cast by voters at the polls. Of those, approximately 6,100 are accepted, and 500 are challenged.

- i. As authorized under the emergency regulations adopted by the Secretary of State in September 2020, the Department implemented a Voter Notification program for voters with challenged provisional ballots, similar to the program the Department has administered for voters with challenged vote-by-mail ballots. As vote-by-mail voters, provisional voters can cure their ballots up until two days before the election certification.
 - ii. Following the processing of provisional ballots, the Department will commence activities associated with processing registration information provided by voters on provisional envelopes and attaching these to voter records (The provisional envelopes used at polling places serve as affidavits of registration and must be processed in accordance with applicable procedures), and notifying voters who cast provisional ballots regarding their voter registration status.
 - iii. Over 290 provisional ballots have been challenged due to the voter residing outside of San Francisco, as indicated by the residential address provided by the voter on the provisional envelope. The Department is in the process of forwarding the affidavits attached to these envelopes to the voters' counties for processing.
 - D. Pursuant to California Elections Code §15301, the Department commenced the official Canvass that includes a manual tally of randomly selected ballots to verify the accuracy of the voting system. The Department expects to complete the Official Canvass and certify the election results during the week of November 23rd.
 - i. Random selection of precincts for one percent tally occurred on Thursday, November 12; the manual tally began on Friday, November 13.
 - ii. The Department began reviewing images of all voted ballot cards and redacting any personal information, as defined in the state election law, prior to releasing the images to the public. Alongside final election results, the Department will post scanned images of voted ballot cards, which also contain detailed audit logs showing how each vote mark was interpreted.
 - E. The Department, in conjunction with the drayage vendor, has been retrieving the voting equipment from every polling place and returning the machines to the warehouse on Pier 31 where the equipment is recorded in the Department's custody and securely stored.
 - F. The Department has nearly completed the processing of stipends for approximately 3,500 poll workers and 588 polling place providers and expects to issue election checks during the week of November 23rd.
 - G. The Department is currently facilitating a Fisherman's Wharf Portside Community Benefit District. On November 17, the Department will conduct the canvass of ballots cast in the special elections to establish a Fisherman's Wharf Portside Community Benefit District.
 - H. The Department has begun processing voter forms, affidavits, and online requests received after the registration deadline for the November 3 election. These include over 9,000 online registration applications transmitted by the Secretary of State's office since October 19.
- II. **The Department has been engaged in assisting the City with future elections planning.**
 - A. The Department is in the final stages of preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) with the goal of selecting the contractor in providing services to support the expected redrawing of district boundaries associated with the offices for the Board of Supervisors in the City and County of San Francisco.
 - i. The Department intends to issue the RFP in early December 2020.
 - B. The Department has begun assessing the potential implementation of the Voter's Choice Act in San Francisco, as required by the [Ordinance No. 200400](#) enacted by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors earlier this year.

Among other things, the ordinance directs the Department to submit a written report to the Board of Supervisors and the Elections Commission by February 28, 2021, regarding the potential implementation of the Voter's Choice Act in San Francisco for future elections held in 2021 and later. The report must address the following topics: (1) voter outreach, education, and services; (2) staffing and staff training; (3) voting equipment and capacity; (4) ballot collection and processing; and (5) location and operation of potential vote centers.

- C. The Department has been preparing its Racial Equity Action Plan. Guided by the citywide Racial Equity Framework released by the City's Office of Racial Equity, this Plan is to provide a blueprint for advancing racial equity in all aspects of the Department's work over the next three years.
 - i. The Department's Racial Equity Action Plan sets goals and associated implementation steps as well as indicators to measure the outcomes resulting from implementation of set goals. Phase 1 of the Department's Racial Equity Action Plan centers on internal programs and policies, and overarching practices regarding Department workforce. Phase 2 of the Plan will focus on external equity indicators, including delivering equitable services and programs to all San Francisco residents.
 - ii. Prior to the final submission of the Plan to the City's Office of Racial Equity by December 31, 2020, the Department intends to submit a draft Racial Equity Action Plan to the Elections Commission to be reviewed at the next Commissions' meeting.
- D. The Department has begun preparing requests for funding necessary to support fixed and variable operating expenses for services and programs associated with the two elections scheduled during the FY2021-2022 and FY2022-23 budget period: June 7, 2022, Statewide Direct Primary Election and November 8, 2022, Consolidated General Election. During the upcoming budget cycle, the Department intends to anticipate possible changes resulting from the 2020 Census (i.e., additional required languages) or legislative actions by the Board of Supervisors (i.e., transition to Voter's Choice Act [VCA] model for future elections) and prepare budget proposals that reflect the necessary funding.