

TO: Future of California Elections members  
From: Kim Alexander, California Voter Foundation  
Date: February 25, 2014  
Re: Recommendations and Questions about VoteCal Functionalities

Over the past year and a half we have discussed VoteCal in several FOCE workgroups and I have been keeping track of the ideas that have arisen from those discussions. I hope this memo will provide a useful starting point for us to develop a collaborative list of recommendations and questions for the Secretary of State's VoteCal team regarding VoteCal. This memo was originally distributed on September 17, 2013; it has been updated to reflect new information about VoteCal that I collected in December via the CACEO Sacramento conference and meetings with vendors.

#### Voter Education/Ballot Pamphlet:

- Give voters the ability to self-identify things about themselves:
  - Language preference: this may be a challenging issue because there are different languages available to voters depending on whether the material is coming from the county or the state – this is something FOCE may want to focus on. According to the VoteCal vendors, language preference is already built in to the plan but perhaps not the need to track it two different ways.
  - Font size and format for voter guides – vendor was unsure if this is included in current plans.

#### Ballot Verification:

- Ensure that the system will host multiple signature images (for VBM and provisional ballot verification) – fairly certain it will but still need to verify.

#### Lookup Tools:

- Find out if polling place location tools can be accessed by street address and will not require inputting a voter's unique data to access. According to the vendors, the current plan is to make this tool available only after a voter has entered personally identifiable information. Additional functionality could be added but it was suggested a better route would be to promote the Secretary of State's plans to participate in VIP and develop a street address polling place lookup tool through it instead.
- Ask that lookup tools remain up year-round and not be removed after the election.

- Ask if they can provide a voter's voting history and not just information for the most recent election. This may be difficult for voters who move between counties since each county is using unique codes in its election management system.
- Confirm they will tell a voter if a VBM ballot is counted, not just received (currently in the plan).
- Will a field be provided that says why a VBM ballot wasn't counted? (Per SB 589) If so what will this look like? This may be a challenging feature to provide statewide since each county uses its own unique codes to designate the reason why a VBM ballot was not counted and there is no standardization of codes across county lines.
- Ask if the lookup tools in VoteCal will be mobile-phone friendly? Vendor confirmed in a private conversation in Dec. 2013 that VoteCal will be.
- Ask them to consider adding a sample ballot lookup tool (not currently planned for; like the polling place lookup tool by street address, this may be something to make available through VIP in the immediate future. The vendors have stated VoteCal is being built in an "extensible design" which means new features can be added without requiring major restructuring).

Other potential functionalities:

- Ask them to consider how VoteCal could be used to facilitate statewide voting.
- Ask about plans to integrate VoteCal with COVR III. (Per Dec. 2013 meetings VoteCal is reportedly being well-integrated with COVR II).
- Current plans are for voters to be able to look up a directory of all the county and state elections that they are eligible to vote in; we could advocate that this be expanded to include municipal elections that are not conducted by counties, and in doing so it would become a comprehensive directory of all of a voter's elections. I raised this idea at the CACEO meeting and there was some interest in pursuing it expressed.
- Show what electoral districts a voter resides in and who their representatives are.

Project timeline:

- Ask if it is feasible to accelerate the project timeline and complete the project before the scheduled June 2016 completion date.