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California Secretary of State

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Secretary of State Alex Padilla Conditionally Certifies Los Angeles County VSAP System; First Publicly Owned Voting System Certified in the Nation

SACRAMENTO, CA – Secretary of State Alex Padilla has conditionally certified Los Angeles County’s Voting Solutions for All People 2.0 (VSAP) for use in the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election. VSAP is the first publicly owned and designed voting system certified for use in the nation.

[Click here for official certification document and Secretary Padilla’s cover letter.](#)

“The certification of the first publicly owned voting system in the nation is a historic milestone for American democracy,” said Secretary of State Alex Padilla. “VSAP is a big step forward in modernizing elections in Los Angeles County, which has been home to some of the oldest voting equipment in the state. Upgrading to a modern system will improve the long-term reliability and security of elections in the largest county in America.”

“I appreciate Los Angeles County’s efforts to engage a broad range of stakeholders and to seek community input during their years long design and testing process. Elections officials have a duty to make voting both as secure and as accessible as possible. As part of my certification of VSAP, I am insisting on some essential modifications to the system and requiring on-going reports from Los Angeles County so that we can continue to improve the voting experience for Angelenos.”

Paper Ballots and Post Election Audits

Since 2002, California has required that every vote be cast on a hand-marked paper ballot or generate a voter verified paper audit trail.

** An estimated 63% of Los Angeles County voters will be voting by mail using hand-marked paper ballots in the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election. This figure will further increase in the years ahead as Los Angeles County transitions to the full [Voter’s Choice Act](#) model.

Voters who prefer to vote in-person can go to any vote center in Los Angeles county that is convenient to them, and use a ballot marking device to make their selections and produce a paper ballot. These ballot marking devices are electronic tablets, but are not connected to the internet, are not used to count votes, and are not allowed to store any data. County officials will tabulate the votes by counting the paper ballots produced by these devices and cast by voters.

These ballot marking devices will allow voters to easily review their selections before printing their ballots. Further, voters will have ample time to review their paper ballot before casting their ballot. Voters will not be limited in the amount of time they have to review their ballot selections.

As a condition of VSAP certification, voters who vote at a vote center, but object to using a ballot marking device will also have the option of requesting a paper ballot they can mark by hand. These ballots provided to voters shall at a minimum contain all of the elements the Federal Voting Assistance Program paper ballots and comply with state law. Voters may have to hand write candidates names, but these ballots provide an opportunity for voters to hand mark their ballot if that is their preference.

State law also requires that county elections officials conduct a post election audit after every election. This audit consists of a manual tally of paper ballots representing a random sampling of 1% of precincts after each election to ensure the accuracy of the vote count.

California Voting System Standards and Certification Process

Before being authorized for use by any county in California, every voting system must go through the state testing and certification process. The California Voting System Standards (CVSS) exceed the Voluntary Voting Systems Guidelines (VVSG) recommended by the U. S. Elections Assistance Commission and are considered the most rigorous in the country.

As part of the CVSS, every system goes through:

- Functional testing,
- Source code review,
- Accessibility and volume testing, and
- Red team security testing that involves experts trying to “break into” the voting system.

For more information on the CVSS process: <https://votingsystems.cdn.sos.ca.gov/cert-and-approval/review-testing-overview.pdf>

Additional Conditions for VSAP Certification

Additional conditions on the certification of VSAP include:

- Secretary of State approved locks and/or tamper evident seals shall be used in areas of the voting system to enhance security and detect tampering — including USB port covers, the ballot marking devices, and county computer workstations.
- Passwords and secure access to the VSAP environment shall be limited to employees on an as-needed basis only.
- Los Angeles County shall provide a written report to the Secretary of State’s office, no later than six months from the date of conditional approval, on the status of encryption of components of any server or workstation hardware used for VSAP programing and development.

- Within five months from the date of conditional approval, Los Angeles County shall provide a plan to the Secretary of State for reviewing the functionality and usability of the system as it pertains to the current use of the "more" button on the ballot marking device including engagement with stakeholders, disability rights advocates and recognized election material design and usability experts.
- Within five months from the date of conditional approval, Los Angeles County shall submit programming changes to the Secretary of State for testing and review in order to be in place for the November 3, 2020 General Election that improve the ballot marking device paper handling and remediate the current jamming and misfeed rate.
 - Los Angeles County is further required to adequately train poll workers on how to properly clear ballot jams and provide a written notice to voters on how to properly feed ballots into devices.
- For the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary, Los Angeles County shall provide clear instruction to voters in advance of the election and at every vote center on the following:
 - The use of the “more” button.
 - Proper insertion of the ballot into the ballot marking device.
 - Instruction shall be available in all languages that Los Angeles County is required to provide election materials by state law. (Elections Code 14201)

Read the certification document for all conditions of certification: <https://votingsystems.cdn.sos.ca.gov/vendors/LAC/vsap20-cert.pdf>

Governance of VSAP Source Code

“In addition to a publicly owned voting system option, I have been a long time believer in the promise of ‘open source’ voting technology, but source code disclosure must be done prudently. Accessibility can and must be balanced with security,” Padilla added.

Secretary Padilla is therefore asking Los Angeles County to regularly update the Secretary of State’s office on its consultation with stakeholders in the governance of and plan for disclosure of VSAP’s source code.

As a State Senator, Secretary Padilla authored SB 360 (2013) to authorize “open source” voting systems where the source code is made publicly available.

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