



Los Angeles County Mock Election Vote Center Monitoring Report

Fall 2019

Prepared by:

Eileen Ma, Charley Chen, Sophia Han, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles
Paul R. Spencer and Gabe Taylor, Disability Rights California

With support from and in collaboration with **Future of California Elections.**

Los Angeles County Mock Election Vote Center Monitoring Report

Fall 2019

Project Summary

Disability Rights California (DRC) and Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA) collaborated to conduct vote center monitoring and voter outreach during the Los Angeles County Mock Elections on September 28th and 29th, 2019. The primary objective was to gather community feedback and identify potential issues arising from changes to the voting system that the county is implementing for the 2020 election cycle.

For this project, DRC and Advancing Justice-LA created an exit survey to collect voter feedback about their voting experiences, and a questionnaire to gather observations (i.e., set-up, check-in, and voting process) made by volunteers and staff at vote centers. In anticipation of robust voter participation, including those with limited English proficiency (LEP), surveys were translated into four languages: Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Korean, Tagalog, and Spanish. DRC and Advancing Justice-LA recruited and trained volunteers to conduct the monitoring and surveying of vote centers during the mock election.

Leading up to the mock elections, 16 locations were identified to be high-priority based on demographic analyses.¹ Three of these high-priority locations were covered for the entirety of both days, seven for at least one full day (10AM - 4PM), and six for at least half a day (10AM - 1PM or 1PM - 4PM). In total, 64 volunteers gathered nearly 700 exit surveys over 294 hours of elections at 24 sites. Staff from DRC and Advancing Justice-LA also visited and observed an additional 23 locations for 30 to 45 minutes. In total, between the volunteers and staff, 47 locations were covered over the span of two days.²

¹ Advancing Justice-LA sought to cover as many areas as possible with a significant Asian voter population, assuming these would also be areas with significant language access needs. ([Return to document](#))

² See Appendix 1 for a complete listing of locations and the quantity of surveys gathered. DRC was less focused on specific locations and instead sought to assess how accessibility was impacted at vote centers of different sizes, including mobile vote centers. Additionally, DRC sought to cover locations in urban, suburban and rural locations. ([Return to document](#))

Summary of Results

1. **Voter turnout across surveyed vote centers was low.** Along with numerous vote center workers, many of our volunteers reported very low turnout throughout the weekend. One team even reported encountering zero voters during their shift.
2. **Voters were receptive to the new Ballot Marking Device (BMD).** The vast majority of survey respondents indicated that the BMD was easy to use and did not mention any issues that were substantially prohibitive to voting.
3. **Poor placement of Ballot Marking Devices impacted accessibility and privacy.** Although it varied across the sites, the placement of the BMD machines often did not effectively use the space available. BMDs were sometimes too closely placed, such that individuals were able to read neighboring screens or that accessibility was or could become difficult for voters with disabilities who use mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, scooters or walkers.
4. **Voters suggested more and improved instructions on how to use the BMD.** Some voters were confused about how to use the BMDs and felt that there was insufficient instruction from vote center workers or otherwise. They recommended making available some sort of how-to or instructional video/demonstration beforehand.
5. **Small sample size of LEP voters resulted in limited data analysis.** In total, only 50 (7%) of the exit survey respondents voted in a non-English language. By and large, these voters were able to successfully vote in the language of their choice, though, responses were mixed regarding the quality of the translation and as to the ease of BMD use.
6. **Voters with disabilities identified a few accessibility challenges.** Several respondents who self-identified as having a disability encountered problems with the audio headset, namely that it had a low volume output and was not

readily available for use. Some voters suggested providing chairs, as people such as seniors and people using walkers found it physically challenging to be standing throughout the entire voting process. Several vote center workers seemed unaware of the various required accessibility features, such as magnifying glasses or signature guides.

7. **Signage was inadequate.** Many reported that signs directing people to and identifying the vote centers were insufficient and in need of improvement. Although signs were posted around the vote centers, the signs were not large enough or did not extend far enough to notify and direct voters effectively. This was especially so at sites within large spaces or where the parking areas did not directly lead to the vote center.

Detailed Findings

A. Regarding the BMD

1. Privacy and Security

Voters reported that, while voting, they were able to read the screens of the BMDs adjacent to them, or felt as if users of adjacent BMDs were able to read their screens. Voters also felt as if they had too little privacy when selecting their choices or that devices were placed too close to each other, or perhaps the dividers were too low. As a possible solution, the BMDs could be placed in a booth or spaced farther apart with higher dividers.

A voter reported that the procedure to clear a paper jam during ballot submission involved opening the BMD and breaking the ballot box seal. In addition to the concerns about individual privacy, the fact that vote center workers may be required to open the ballot box as part of the regular paper jam clearing procedure kindles doubts about the legitimacy and security of the vote center. If viable, clearing technical issues should be possible without opening the ballot box.

2. User Interface

Voters reported that it was unclear, for certain questions on the ballot, how many choices existed and how many selections could be made. Many voters commented that it was not immediately apparent that more choices could be accessed by touching the “More” button to display those additional options. Others stated that it was an unfair disadvantage that some choices would necessarily be relegated to a second page, if not randomized.

Similarly, it was not distinct enough when a question allowed for more than one selection, especially if the voter was not actively looking for it. This led some voters to under select on questions that allowed for multiple choices. In addition, it was recommended that some sort of notification be installed which would appear whenever a question was left unanswered. This notification would ask if it was intentional to leave a question blank before proceeding.

3. Submission of Ballot

A very common complaint was that the ballot submission process was counterintuitive. Despite the on-screen instructions, voters frequently reported walking away from the BMD with their ballot in hand, believing the printout to be a receipt or some other sort of record.

Perhaps this could be due to unawareness that the BMD merely marks the ballot, which is the coded paper they are given. Some voters assumed the BMDs allow for electronic voting and that the act of choosing on the screen was recording a vote. Added instruction about the regurgitated marked ballot would be helpful.

4. Audio

Although audio was available on the BMD, volunteers reported that the audio for the “back” and “forward” buttons were reversed, as well as the “screen on” and “screen off” buttons. Furthermore, headsets were still bound

to the machines and did not invite use. It would be prudent to provide sanitary disposable ear covers.

5. Chairs / Adjustable Height

Some voters complained that they were uncomfortable standing for the duration required to vote. Others complained that the machines were not height-adjustable, causing back and/or neck discomfort. An option to sit while voting should be provided.

6. Non-English Language Experience

Although responses varied, some voters complained about the quality of the translated ballots. The main criticism was that the translation was overly formal at the cost of comprehensibility.³

One voter commented that when they tried to add a write-in candidate, the BMD's keyboard language remained in English, rather than the non-English language the voter had selected.

B. Regarding the Check-in Process

1. Accurate and Efficient Check-in Process

Surveys found occasional difficulty matching voters to their correct registrations using the name-spelling method. Vote center workers were only asking for the first three letters of each name, which returned too many results. Voters with common names faced a similar challenge of locating their specific record.

Vote center workers, with a multitude of matching or near-matching names on the screen, then had the challenge of matching the individual with

³ Respondents complained about obscure translations for Farsi, Tagalog, and Spanish. ([Return to document](#))

a registration. Given the low turnout, this did not cause major issues beyond voter annoyance. Should there be high turnout on Election Day, it is reasonable to anticipate challenges with checking in people in a timely manner.

In one troubling instance, a survey respondent reported that someone had already participated in the mock election in their name. Vote center workers were able to revoke the previous submission and allow the voter to continue, but such an incident is a serious failing in the process. Better training for vote center workers to be more familiar and consistent with check-in protocols could prevent delays and provide greater reliability in voter-registration matching.

2. Voter Bill of Rights

Based on the volunteer questionnaires for 47 locations, only 24 reported the vote centers having the Voter Bill of Rights (VBR) present at the check-in tables. Others reported the VBR posted in less readily visible locations, while others had them stored in boxes. However, vote center workers were able to provide or post the VBR once reminded.

C. Publicity

In total, 301 of the survey respondents indicated that they felt the event was well publicized in their community. Of these, the most popular forms of publicity were through family/friends/work, radio broadcast, email, and social media, in order of most to least common. Television and mail lagged far behind.⁴ However, respondents reported social media, mail, and TV as their preferred method of notification.

⁴ See Appendix 2 for numerical results of respondent notification methods. ([Return to document](#))

D. Vote Center Location and Organization

1. Commute

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of voters were able to reach their chosen vote center within 0 to 15 minutes, and 67% traveled between 0 to 5 miles. For the mock election voters, the geographic placement of the vote centers may have been well-done, since the large majority of participating voters did not travel far. On the other hand, our study cannot account for voters who may not have participated because of transportation or travel distance issues. It is possible that only those who lived closer to the vote centers chose or were able to participate.⁵

2. Signage

Many voters and surveyors alike reported that exterior signage was inadequate. Commonly, signage consisted of 8.5' x 11' sheets of standard printer paper (orange in color) posted in the area around the vote center location. The small size of these signs was ineffective as they were not readily visible at longer distances, especially outdoors and in inclement weather. For example, volunteers assigned to a vote center on a college campus reported difficulty finding the vote center among the many buildings. Another team assigned to an outdoor vote center reported that signs were damaged by rain. Signs generally did not cover enough space (e.g., the vote center parking areas), leading to some difficulties in finding the centers, especially when the parking area was not directly adjacent to the vote center.

Outdoor signs should be made large enough to be viewed from a distance and should be resistant to wind and rain. Signs should be affixed with adhesive or mounting brackets that can withstand multiple days outdoors. Typically, mock election signage was affixed with blue painter's

⁵ See Appendix 3 for numerical results of respondent travel modes. ([Return to document](#))

tape, which seems unlikely to withstand prolonged exposure to the elements. Signs should also be extended farther along the routes which voters are anticipated to traverse to arrive at the vote centers.⁶

3. Parking

Several locations had inadequate parking. Pio Pico, Little Tokyo, Plummer Park, Glendale Library, and Granada Hills were reported to have poor parking availability.

4. Interior Layout

The placement of BMDs varied across vote centers. While machines were well-placed in some vote centers, others were either cramped or did not efficiently make use of the space available.⁷ More attention to lay-out of the vote centers, including BMD placement is advised. For example, the BMDs at Malibu City Hall were spaced too close together, putting voters' privacy at risk. Living Stone Cathedral was cited as one which had the best layout.

5. Vote Center Workers

While the vast majority of the respondents praised vote center workers for their friendliness and eagerness to help those who needed it, our findings contained more than one report that vote center workers were rude or unwelcoming.

Some respondents also made observations questioning the competency of vote center workers, particularly about the check-in process. This may be attributable to inconsistent training for the check-in procedure. Similarly, the procedure to handle paper jams should be reinforced, as this issue arose more than once.

⁶ See Appendix 4 for photos of signage. ([Return to document](#))

⁷ See Appendix 5 for photos of BMD placement at two vote centers. ([Return to document](#))

E. Disability Accessibility

In total, 57 participants identified as someone with a disability.⁸ Several participants encountered problems, such as low volume audio output when using the headset, unresponsive touch screen/trouble writing with the stylus, needing chairs for seniors and people with disabilities, small font size, lacking adjustable height for the BMDs, and lacking braille. When asked about other accessibility options, vote center workers were generally unaware of the required features, such as magnifying glasses or signature guides.

Placement of BMDs impacted accessibility. For instance, the Calabasas senior center placed BMDs too close to the wall to provide adequate passage and space for people using wheelchairs. The check-in stations and BMDs should also be placed such that accessibility would be minimally affected in the event of larger turnout. More efficient use of floor space, and a conscientious floor plan could alleviate these issues.

F. LEP Voters

In total, 50 responses were gathered from those who voted in a language other than English. LEP voters seemed to have good access to translated materials and the translated ballot through the BMD. Common dissatisfaction among LEP voters were translation quality of the materials and ballot, and lack of or inability to locate bilingual vote center workers proficient in their specific languages.⁹

Key Recommendations

1. Privacy

- a. Add privacy screens, or improve dividers or booths.

⁸ See Appendix 7 for a breakdown of the types of assistance utilized by respondents. ([Return to document](#))

⁹ See Appendix 8 for a numerical summary of LEP responses. ([Return to document](#))

- b. Space apart BMDs and efficiently use available space.
- c. Establish a procedure and/or train vote center workers on how to clear paper jams without breaking open ballot box seal.

2. User Interface

- a. Provide better instructions for voters about the final submission of the paper ballot, or make that step of the voting process more intuitive.
- b. Make the “more” and “multiple selection” buttons more obvious and easier to use.

3. Set-up & Check-in

- a. Avoid having BMD screens face the center of the room or other high traffic areas.
- b. In case of rain, move voting process indoors and have waterproof signage.
- c. Extend signage to parking lots and have larger signs/banners.
- d. Provide exact layouts for setting up each vote center to increase consistency, and ensure compliance with the approved set-ups.
- e. Reinforce consistent check-in process across vote centers.
- f. Reduce risk of error by training vote center workers to search for and find voters’ names and addresses more efficiently and discourage voters’ self-selection from a list of found records.

4. Accessibility

- a. Make sure language translations are accurate, understandable, and in plain language for that language group.
- b. Audio headsets should be readily available for use (e.g., unwound, at correct volume).
- c. Set up chairs or make them available for seniors and people with disabilities.
- d. Have a means to adjust height of BMDs.

5. Miscellaneous

- a. Have vote center workers who are not busy serve as ambassadors outside the vote center or near the entrance.

- b. Focus more on social media, email, and radio outreach to increase publicity.
- c. Increase outreach and promotion of the vote centers and new voting times.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location and Quantity of Surveys Gathered

LOCATION	QUANTITY OF SURVEYS
Azusa Memorial Park	4
Bateman Hall	5
Bethel AME	27
Carolyn Rosas County Park	27
Carson Community Center	139
Clara St. Park	4
College of the Canyon	2
Cypress Park Library	16
Exposition Park Library	1
Glendale Library	100
JACC	19
LA Zoo	40
Liberty Park	48
MacArthur Park	28
Mt. Sac	9
Petit Park	69
Pio Pico	49
Plummer Park	1
Salazar Park	5
Verdugo Center	2
Villa Park	55
Watts Labor Community Action	1
Yosemite	19
Zev Yarosvasky	25
Total	695

A table depicting the amount of surveys collected from each mock vote center location. 4 Surveys collected from Azusa Memorial Park. 5 Surveys collected from Bateman Hall. 27 Surveys collected from Bethel AME. 27 Surveys

collected from Carolyn Rosas County Park. 139 Surveys collected from Carson Community Center. 4 Surveys collected from Clara St. Park. 2 Surveys collected from College of the Canyon. 16 Surveys collected from Cypress Park Library. 1 Survey collected from Exposition Park Library. 100 Surveys collected from Glendale Library. 19 Surveys collected from JACC. 40 Surveys collected from LA Zoo. 48 Surveys collected from Liberty Park. 28 Surveys collected from MacArthur Park. 9 Surveys collected from Mt. Sac. 69 Surveys collected from Petit Park. 49 Surveys collected from Pio Pico. 1 Survey collected from Plummer Park. 5 Surveys collected from Salazar Park. 2 Surveys collected from Verdugo Center. 55 Surveys collected from Villa Park. 1 Survey collected from Watts Labor Community Action. 19 Surveys collected from Yosemite. 25 Surveys collected from Zev Yarosvasky. 695 Surveys collected in total.

Appendix 2: Modes of Mock Election Publicization

A) How respondents were informed of the mock election:

Method Notified By	Number of Responses (Multiple selections possible)	Percentage of Total Responses
Family/Friends/Work	179	25.76
Radio	172	24.75
Email	133	19.14
Social Media	130	18.71
Community Organizations	78	11.22
Passing by	50	7.19
Mail	43	6.19
TV	32	4.6
Other	53	7.63

A table showing the different ways people were informed of the Mock Election followed by their respective percentage to the total responses. People notified by family, friends or work of 179 responses made up 25.76 percent of the respondents. People notified by radio of 172 responses made up 24.75 percent of the respondents. People notified by email of 133 responses made up 19.14 percent of the respondents. People notified by Social Media of 130 responses made up 18.71 percent of the respondents. People notified by Community Organizations of 78 responses made up 11.22 percent of the respondents. People notified by Passerby of 50 responses made up 7.19 percent of the respondents. People notified by Mail of 43 responses made up 6.19 percent of the respondents. People notified by TV of 32 responses made up 4.6 percent of the respondents. People notified by other means of 53 responses made up 7.63 percent of the respondents.

B) Respondents' preferred method of notification:

Preferred Method of Notification	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Social Media	376	26.91
Mail	320	22.91
TV	304	21.76
Radio	213	15.25
Email	184	13.17

A table depicting the respondents' preferred method of notification followed by the percentage of the respondents they represented. 376 responses, 26.91% of respondents preferred Social Media as their preferred method of notification. 320 responses, 22.91% of respondents preferred Mail as their preferred method of notification. 304 responses, 21.76% of respondents preferred TV as their preferred method of notification. 213 responses, 15.25% of respondents preferred Radio as their preferred method of notification. 184 responses, 13.17% of respondents preferred Email as their preferred method of notification.

Appendix 3: Time and distance travelled by survey respondents:

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Time travelled		
Arrived in 0-15 minutes	476	68
Arrived in 16-30 minutes	154	22
Arrived in 30+ minutes	35	5
Distance Travelled		
Travelled 0-5 miles	468	67
Travelled 6-10 miles	94	14
Travelled 10+ miles	77	11
Mode of Transportation		
Car/Motorcycle	597	86
Walking	68	10
Bus/Metro	28	4
Bicycle/Scooter	6	1

A table depicting the amount of time and distance traveled by respondents and the mode of transportation they used followed by the respective percentage of said amount of respondents. 476 respondents travelled between 0-15 minutes, amounting to 68% of respondents. 154 respondents travelled between 16-30 minutes, amounting to 22% of respondents. 35 respondents travelled more than 30 minutes, amounting to 5% of respondents. 468 respondents travelled between 0-5 miles, amounting to 67% of respondents. 94 respondents travelled between 6-10 miles, amounting to 14% of respondents. 77 respondents travelled more than 10 miles, amounting to 10% of respondents. 597 respondents used a car or motorcycle as their mode of transportation, amounting to 86% of respondents. 68 respondents walked as their mode of transportation, amounting to 10% of respondents. 28 respondents used the bus or metro as their mode of transportation, amounting to 4% of respondents. 6 respondents used a bicycle or scooter as their mode of transportation, amounting to 1% of respondents.

Appendix 4: Signage Examples



Photo 1: Signage outside of Exposition Park Library. Although plentiful, the signs are too small to be effective for outdoor purposes. Pedestrians are not immediately able to understand the message.



Photo 2: Signage provided by the City of West Hollywood. Signage here is better because it is large and vibrant enough to immediately convey its message.

Appendix 5: Photos of vote centers



Photo 3: Santa Monica College. BMDs are facing the check-in location.
The layout fails to efficiently utilize available space.

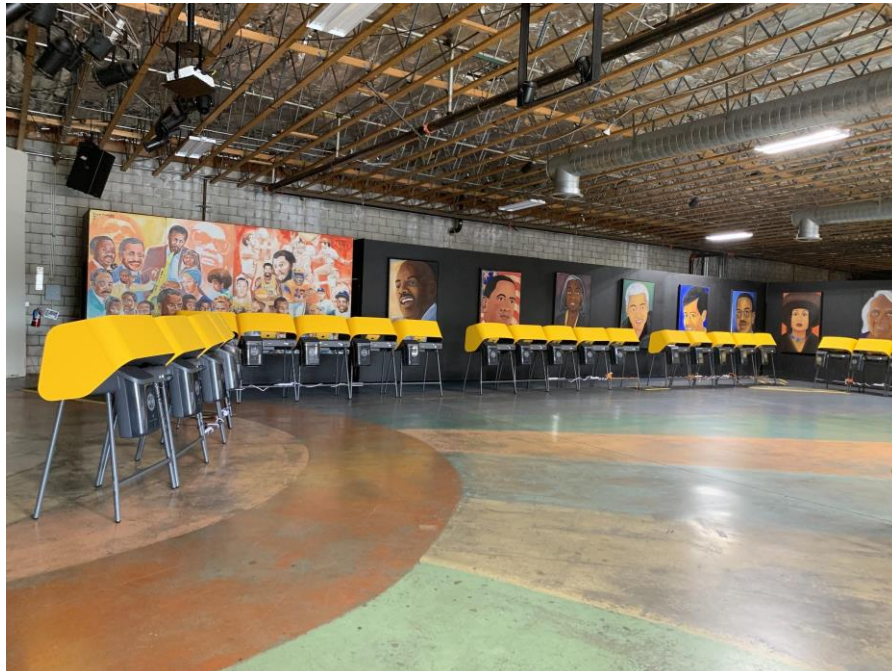


Photo 4: Watts Labor Community Center. While BMDs are appropriately placed so that the large vibrant screens are not facing high traffic areas, BMDs are too close to the wall to allow for adequate wheelchair passage. The layout does not efficiently utilize available space.

Appendix 6: Numbers of Respondents who Utilized Assistance

Type of Assistance	Number of Respondents
Physical Assistance	9
Audio Headset	4
Visual Assistance	5
Control Pad	3
Comprehension of BMD	5

A table depicting the number of respondents that required specific assistance during the mock election. 9 Respondents required physical assistance. 4 respondents required audio/headset assistance. 5 respondents required visual assistance. 3 respondents required control pad assistance. 5 respondents required assistance in comprehending BMDs.

Appendix 7: Language Access Quality and Number of Responses

Question	Average Score (Scale of 1 - 5)
I found materials readily available in my language.	4.46
The materials were accurately translated and plainly understandable.	4
There were bilingual persons available to help.	3.38
It was easy to find translated materials on the Ballot Marking Device.	4.4
It was easy to obtain assistance if I needed it.	4.26
Language	Number of Responses
Armenian	2
Chinese (Cantonese / Mandarin)	13
Farsi	5
Hindi	1
Korean	3
Russian	4
Spanish	17
Tagalog	4
Thai	1

A table depicting the quality of language access averaged by responses on a scale of 1-5. When presented with the statement, “I found materials readily available in my language,” respondents gave an average of 4.46 rating. When presented with the statement, “The materials were accurately translated and plainly understandable,” respondents gave an average of 4.0 rating. When presented with the statement, “There were bilingual persons available to help,” respondents gave an average of 3.38 rating. When presented with the statement, “It was easy to find translated materials on the Ballot Marking Device,” respondents gave an average of 4.4 rating. When presented with the statement, “It was easy to obtain assistance if I needed it,” respondents gave an average of 4.26 rating. The languages affected and the amount of responses to language accessibility are as follows. Armenian had 2 responses. Chinese Cantonese or Mandarin had 13 responses. Farsi had 5 responses. Hindi had 1 response. Korean had 3 responses. Russian had 4 responses. Spanish had 17 responses, Tagalog had 4 responses. Thai had 1 response.