

# Your Vote, Your Way!

Make your voice heard this election  
with the help of Sacramento's  
new Vote Centers!



SACRAMENTO  
COUNTY




## A NOTE FROM THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

Dear Voter,

On behalf of the Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections Department, I am delighted to promote voter education in Sacramento County.

As public servants, my staff and I strive to ensure secure, accurate, and transparent elections. Each election is a process owned by you, the voter; and it is designed to be observable by all members of the public. From testing the voting equipment prior to an election to our post-election audit, we follow strict procedures to safeguard the integrity of the voting process and make sure the results are accurate. We welcome everyone to take part.

It takes thousands of dedicated County staff, volunteers, and community partners to conduct each election. We ask for your help by sharing the information in this publication to ensure all voters know their voting options, and that they are welcome to observe and participate in every aspect of the election process.



Courtney Bailey-Kanelos

# Removing Barriers to the Ballot Box

Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections  
institutes the Voter's Choice Act

BY HOWARD HARDEE

It's easier than ever for voters in Sacramento County to turn in their ballots. All registered voters receive a ballot in the mail — and postage is prepaid, so voting is as simple as putting an envelope back in the mail.

Dedicated voters who prefer to cast ballots in person can still go to one of 84 Vote Centers or 58 drop-box locations throughout the county. Plus, neighborhood polling places have been replaced by multi-service Vote Centers, some Vote Centers open 10 days ahead of Election Day and all open three days ahead of Election Day.

All of the changes are geared toward removing barriers to the ballot box, said Courtney Bailey-Kanelos, the county's Registrar of Voters.

"We're mailing a ballot to every voter, but also providing those in-person voting opportunities for folks that may need additional assistance, including voters with disabilities and voters who may need assistance in a language other than English," she said.

The California Voter's Choice Act of 2016 made Sacramento one of five pilot

counties to institute this new model. The Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections Department is in charge of implementing the system, which rolled out during the 2018 midterm election.

Elections officials in other states, such as Colorado and Oregon, have implemented similar policies and reported increased voter participation.

"Many people attribute that to the ballot being in their hand," Bailey-Kanelos said. "It lets people know the election is coming and gives them time to review the ballot. Even if someone decides to vote in person, they are still more prepared for the upcoming election."

That's especially important because ballots for California elections tend to be long. "We have our elections all consolidated to go at the same time, which means all the different districts are on the ballot for the upcoming elections," she said. "With the Vote by Mail process, people can take their time. It's really beneficial for the voter, to give them a heads up of what's coming."

The vast majority of voters choose to Vote by Mail. Only 6% of Sacramento voters cast their ballot in person during the 2018 elections, but there were still long lines on Election Day. Voter Registration & Elections is anticipating more of the same for the primary and presidential elections in 2020, partly due to a strong expected turn out.

"We're going to do our best to manage that, but we also want to be honest with our messaging and expectations," Bailey-Kanelos said. "To avoid the lines, vote early: Use your mail-in ballot or come to a Vote Center on an early voting day."



**"We're mailing a ballot to every voter, but also providing those in-person voting opportunities for folks that may need additional assistance."**

COURTNEY BAILEY-KANELOS  
Registrar of Voters, Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections

# The Accessible Option

Vote by Mail makes voting easier than ever for everybody

BY HOWARD HARDEE

**S**teve Capps of Elk Grove is the model of an engaged citizen. An avid consumer of news and dedicated voter who feels strongly about the democratic process, he hasn't missed voting in an election for nearly 50 years.

"I think it's important to vote," he said. "I really took pride in going to the polling places and voting in person. I thought it was important to show that I was voting."

Capps, 66, retired in 2011 after spending most of his career as a newspaper reporter covering statewide affairs, later moving into community relations for local government. He lives with his wife of 30 years and stays busy as a volunteer for the Elk Grove City Council Disability Advisory Committee, a group that reviews public projects for accessibility for people who are disabled.

Capps is paralyzed on one side of his body from a stroke he suffered about 10 years ago. He has limited walking capability and can't stand for long periods, but he hasn't let that prevent him from participating in democracy.

"It became increasingly difficult for me to get to a voting place," he said. "I started voting by mail, which is just great for somebody like me. I can look at the ballot, study it, write it at my leisure, and then all I have to do is get to the mailbox."

So, I haven't missed any elections."

Voting by Mail makes voting easier for everyone, including the elderly, people experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities. Prior to the 2018 midterm election, voters had to call or mail Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections to request a mail-in ballot. Now, every registered voter in Sacramento County is automatically mailed a ballot 29 days before the election.

**"A lot of people have given so much for this country, so the least I could do is vote."**

**STEVE CAPPS**  
Voter, Elk Grove City Council Disability Advisory Committee

"You don't have to do anything at all to receive the ballot," said Whitney Tomosovich, the county's Vote by Mail and Voting Systems manager. "By eliminating the need to do anything, it's making it more accessible for people."



Life-long voter, Steve Capps, shows how easy it is to vote by mail.  
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Now they're getting the ballot earlier.

For voters with disabilities, Voter Registration & Elections offers an Accessible Vote by Mail option.

"Using this service, people can vote at home on their computer with their own assistive technology," Tomosovich said. "It gives them the ability to mark their ballot privately and independently in the privacy of their own home."

For dedicated voters like Capps, the ability to vote isn't anything to take for granted — it's precious. When he was a reporter covering the State Capitol, he "saw the importance of politics, the way it affected people's lives," he said. "And I thought, 'A lot of people have given so much for this country, so the least I could do is vote.'"

## PROVIDING PREPAID POSTAGE

In the past, voting by mail was less of a right and more of a privilege. But now, the Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections Department sends ballots to all registered voters in the county 29 days before Election Day. The department also has arranged for prepaid postage, so voters don't have to use stamps to mail their ballots back.

Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections encourages voters to vote early. Voting by Mail is easy and helps slow the rush on Election Day. Election officials are expecting a strong turnout for the 2020 elections, so vote early to avoid the lines.

"We had a really great voter turnout in 2018, which was the first year we implemented this system," said Tomosovich. "Those numbers are promising, and we think having postage-paid envelopes — and including 'I Voted' stickers in all of our ballot packets — will encourage people to mail their ballots in."



# Making Voting Easier

Introducing Vote Centers and the services they offer

BY HOWARD HARDEE

The most recent election was a learning experience for Larry and Margie Miramontes because it was the first after sweeping changes were made to the way people vote in Sacramento County.

For starters, their Vote Center is one of 18 open for 11 days, including weekends. Unlike the old polling places, Vote Centers offer a full range of services to suit a variety of voters' needs.

"We can do anything at the Vote Center that they can do at the Elections Office," Larry said. "We can register people, we can handle special circumstances. If somebody has trouble communicating, we can handle that."

Margie and Larry recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They live in Foothill Farms, an unincorporated community near Antelope, and both work as election inspectors, receiving

training and support from the Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections Department. Their duties include supervising volunteers who staff the Vote

**"We can do anything at the Vote Center that they can do at the Elections Office."**

**LARRY MIRAMONTES**  
Election Inspector, Sacramento County  
Voter Registration & Elections

Center and driving ballots to a location where they're picked up by a team of Elections Officials.



Another aspect of the Vote Centers that makes voting more accessible: Voters don't have to go to a specific polling place to cast their ballot in person. They can do so at any Vote Center in Sacramento County.

"Voters can go to a Vote Center near where they work, near their grocery store or church," Margie said.

John Quesada, who runs a Vote Center at the Sylvan Oaks Library in Citrus Heights, is a fan of the changes to the way local voters cast their ballots. His Vote Center sees residents from all over Sacramento County rather than just a small precinct. "If you come in, we can

print you out a ballot lickety-split," he said. "We're not limited to a precinct or neighborhood, and I think that provides a lot more flexibility to the voter."

That's really what the new voting system is all about — providing flexibility to and reducing obstacles for voters. Margie and Larry think it's working. Now, they just need to make sure not to run out of stickers.

## PERKS OF THE VOTE CENTER



As convenient as it's become to Vote by Mail, Margie and Larry Miramontes agree that there's still something special about voting in person. And it's easier than ever, thanks to features focused on accessibility at Vote Centers throughout Sacramento County.

### Vote Centers feature:

- **The freedom to vote** at any Vote Center in the county and flexibility to vote on weekends
- **More staff members** on hand to assist voters
- **More voting machines to accommodate a higher volume of voters**
- **Access to multi-lingual services**
- **Specialized voting machines for voters with disabilities**
- **The ability to register voters** and print their correct ballot

# Conditional Voter Registration

Vote Centers can help voters with conditional registration

BY MATT JOCKS

It was just a mid-week lunch for Andrew Bowler, but on this day, it came with a little democracy for dessert.

Bowler had never considered himself a political person but that changed in recent years. When he looked into voter registration, he realized the deadline had passed for this year's special election in Folsom.

Before the Voter's Choice Act, that would have meant sitting out the election. It took a lunch with his girlfriend to realize that there was still room for his voice.

"My girlfriend actually worked at Brookdale, where the Brookdale Folsom Vote Center was located," Bowler said. "I went over there and talked to them about registering. It took about five or ten minutes to get it done."

Bowler's story, or ones like it, are playing out throughout Sacramento County. Some, like Bowler, are relatively new to the voting process. Others may have been long-time voters who recently moved and have to re-register.

Although the deadline to register is 15 calendar days before an election, the conditional registration process allows voters who miss that deadline to register and have their vote counted.

"Conditional Voter Registration puts safeguards in voting to ensure all eligible voters have the opportunity to vote," said Heather Ditty Voter Registration and

Outreach Manager. "Under Conditional Voter Registration, as long as we receive all the required information, including an affidavit of registration completed and signed, the ballot will be counted," Ditty added.

**I realized that I have a voice, and I should use it."**

**ANDREW BOWLER**  
Sacramento Voter

The numbers from the first major elections held under provisions of the Voter's Choice Act show that it is making a difference. In the June 2018 Primary Election, Ditty said 2,978 county voters took advantage of Conditional Voter Registration. In the November General Election, that number grew to nearly 12,000.

Voters who have taken advantage of this new system have expressed their appreciation. Ditty said some voters

have even written "Thank You" on their ballot envelopes.

With the Presidential race on the ballot this time, interest will likely be higher. Relative newcomers like Bowler can be expected to join the process for the first time.

"I guess I always thought that voting doesn't really matter," he said. "But, following what's going on, I really decided that it does matter.

"With all the things that are going on when you turn on the TV, I don't want to sound overly dramatic, but I realized that I have a voice, and I should use it."

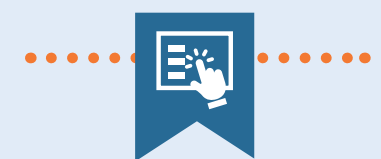


## CONDITIONAL VOTER SERVICES

Even if you have missed the 15-day deadline to register to vote, you can still make your voice heard through Conditional Voter Registration.

### Here's how it works:

- 1 Find your most convenient Vote Center at [elections.saccounty.net](https://elections.saccounty.net).
- 2 At the Vote Center, you will be asked to complete an affidavit, verifying your eligibility. You will then be given a ballot.
- 3 The verification process will include signature matching and making sure you have not voted in another county.
- 4 If information is missing or there are other questions, you will be contacted by an election official.



**To register before the deadline, you can go to [registertovote.ca.gov](https://registertovote.ca.gov).**

# The Ballot-Counting Process

BY MATT JOCKS

To ensure the integrity of the voting process, Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections follows a strict system of checks and balances when handling voter ballots.

## 1 Verification

Signatures on ballot envelopes are compared by human eyes to signatures on file. If they don't appear to match, Election Officials will contact the voter.

## 2 Extraction

Election Officials work in teams of three. One loads the envelopes. A second removes the ballot. A third puts the ballot in the box to be counted. Envelopes and ballots are separated.

## 3 Processing

Once the ballots are sent to a separate room, the processing team flattens ballots that have been folded and also inspects for any tears, stains or other damage. The process is to ensure ballots do not impede the work of the ballot counting machines.

## 4 Ballot Counting

Teams of two people operate the ballot counting machines.

## Adjudication

Ballots with cross-outs, written notations or other indications are inspected on screen to determine clear intent of the voter.

## 6 Review

One percent of all ballots, chosen at random, are hand-counted and compared to machine-counted results to verify the accuracy of the process.

## Reporting

Results are posted after 8 p.m. on Election Day.

## SECURITY IN THE VOTING SYSTEM

Throughout the ballot counting process, there are procedures to make sure ballots are accounted for and processed fairly and accurately. Procedures are carried out in teams.

- Individuals are not left alone with the ballots
- Voting is done on paper ballots or recorded with a paper printout and are maintained for review

- Ballots are bagged and labeled to indicate who processed them and when
- Election Department computers and ballot counting machines operate on a closed network, not connected to other county servers

- The entire process is under 24 hour video surveillance which is available through a public records request

# The More You Know About Voting

County Registrar answers commonly asked questions about voter registration

BY MATT JOCKS

The importance of voting hasn't changed, but the way it's done certainly has. Sacramento County Registrar of Voters Courtney Bailey-Kanelos stresses that these changes are for the better.

Under the California Voter's Choice Act of 2016, Sacramento County has moved from a polling-place model to a Vote Center model for in-person voting. There are fewer places, but they are more accessible and have more capabilities, with longer hours, days before the election and on the spot registration.

Bailey-Kanelos said that, in addition to making voting easier and increasing turnout, a major reason for the legislation was to conserve state resources. The cost and labor for hundreds of polling places made little sense with an electorate that now votes mostly by mail.

The Voter Registration & Elections Department holds monthly public outreach meetings, where the most common question is simply about making sure voters can register and vote.

## Here are the basics:

- Voters who are not registered automatically through DMV can register in person at post offices and libraries or online at [registertovote.ca.gov](http://registertovote.ca.gov)
- Registration deadline is 15 days before the election, but those who miss the deadline can go to a Vote Center, complete the registration process and vote under Conditional Voter Registration
- Voters who are 16 or 17 can pre-register and automatically be registered when they turn 18

- All U.S. citizens are eligible except for those in state or federal prison or those deemed incapable by a judge under a court order  
Voters must re-register if they have
- changed their name, residence address, political party or updated their signature

The Vote Centers are capable of handling registration issues and correcting mistakes. They also enable commuters within the county to vote where it's most convenient. Voters who work in a different city in the county can vote at any Vote Center.

Bailey-Kanelos also has faced questions about election legitimacy, including the accusations of widespread voting by non-citizens or under the names of dead voters.

Regarding non-citizens, she said reports have been extremely rare and those instances have been by accident.

"We've had a few cases where they filled out the form, not

understanding what it was for," Bailey-Kanelos said. "When they found out, they were terrified. They don't want to jeopardize their status."

Bailey-Kanelos said the voter files are updated for deaths at least monthly and sometimes more frequently.

While voting has become generally more accessible, she did have advice:

"Because of Conditional Voter Registration, there can be lines on Election Day at the Vote Centers," she said. "We are trying our best to address that, but our advice is to vote early to avoid lines."

Courtney Bailey-Kanelos (left) and Hang Nguyen (right) enjoy fielding questions about the voting process.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



"...Our advice is to vote early to avoid lines."

COURTNEY BAILEY-KANELOS  
Registrar of Voters, Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections

## OPTIONS FOR VOTING IN PERSON

Many voters choose to return their ballots by mail. But for those who choose to vote in person, there are plenty of options.

### In 2018,

there were 78 Vote Centers in Sacramento County. More may be added for the 2020 election cycle.

**18 Vote Centers** were open 10 days before the election, the remainder were open beginning the Saturday before the election.

**Hours varied.** The earliest opening time was 8 a.m. and the latest closing was at 7 p.m.

**Vote Centers** were located at city halls, community centers, libraries and colleges.

**Ballot drop boxes** were located at city halls, public libraries and certain grocery stores.



For more information, visit:  
[www.elections.saccounty.net](http://www.elections.saccounty.net).



# Voting in Sacramento Has Never Been Easier



**HAVE QUESTIONS? WE HAVE ANSWERS!**

## County of Sacramento Voter Registration & Elections

7000 65th Street, Suite A  
Sacramento, CA 95823  
Office hours are Monday  
through Friday

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.,  
excluding County holidays

Main Line: (916) 875-6451

Toll Free: 800-762-8019

**For general questions,  
email:**  
[voterinfo@saccounty.net](mailto:voterinfo@saccounty.net)

**For Vote by Mail ballot  
related questions, email:**  
[vbm@saccounty.net](mailto:vbm@saccounty.net)

SACRAMENTO  
COUNTY



*Inquire about the availability of  
documents in accessible formats.*

With the implementation of California's Voter's Choice Act of 2016, Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections is on the cutting edge of voting services. With the provision of paid-postage and Vote Centers, it is easier than ever for voters to vote in every election.

### HOW TO VOTE

Through the mail, Ballot Drop Box location,  
or Vote Center.

### WHEN TO VOTE

You now have up to 11 days to vote at a Vote  
Center location in Sacramento County. Election Day  
hours are 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

**Ballot Drop Box locations open 29 days before  
Election Day**

### WHERE TO VOTE

Voters can visit any Vote Center in the County.  
Every registered voter in the County of Sacramento  
will be mailed a ballot starting 29 days before  
Election Day.

**You can vote early or on Election Day at a  
location close to home, work, or anywhere in the County!**



### Get the support you need:

Vote Center staff will be there to help you have  
a great voting experience, including providing  
assistance in multiple languages, helping  
voters with disabilities, and updating your voter  
registration information.

**To learn more about your voting options visit:**  
<https://elections.saccounty.net>



Scan your smart-phone  
here to get the  
SacVote app.



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