



COUNTY OF LAKE
Registrar of Voters Office

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Lake County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Maria Valadez, Registrar of Voters
SUBJECT: 2022-2023 Lake County Civil Grand Jury Response
DATE: August 14, 2023

Pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05, I hereby submit my responses on the Findings and Recommendations of the 2022-2023 Lake County Civil Grand Jury's Final Report, "Voting in Lake County," filed with my office July 12, 2023.

FINDINGS

F1. Some Election Day workers do not fully understand all aspects of polling place practices and procedures because they only attend role-specific trainings.

Response: DISAGREE partially with finding.

Explanation: Inspectors are required under State Law to attend training, and all poll workers are strongly encouraged to attend.

Training sessions conducted by Lake County's Registrar of Voters' office are based on uniform standards provided by the California Secretary of State. The same instruction manual is used for all role-specific trainings. During each training session, the following topics are addressed: voter rights; election challenge procedures; poll hours and procedures concerning setting up, opening, and closing of the polls; relevant election laws; cultural competency; assisting voters with disabilities; provisional voting; and any other subjects that will assist poll workers in carrying out Election Day duties. Emphasis on role-specific duties allows poll workers the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification based on the functions they will carry out.

Technicians in charge of accessible voting equipment also attend mandatory training. The instruction manual for this position is role-specific for the voting equipment and assisting voters with access and functional needs, allowing them to privately and independently cast their votes. Technicians are also required to assist the Precinct Board with any other processes on Election Day.

Our office makes every effort to appoint all poll workers at least 29 days prior to an election. Training sessions are held the week immediately prior to Election Day.

However, there are circumstances where staff or the precinct Inspector must find a replacement worker after the training sessions have been conducted, and time constraints do not allow for individual training of late appointees.

An election instruction manual is available at the poll site for all precinct board members who want to review Election Day procedures and processes.

F2. Not all polling places were equally active on Election Day.

Response: AGREE with Finding.

Explanation: Voters may return their completed ballots to any polling place or official ballot drop box within Lake County (*as well as any County elections office, polling place, vote center or official ballot drop box within California during a statewide election*). Variation in activity at polling places is expected.

F3. All registered voters receive an encrypted, postage-paid envelope along with their official ballots by mail about a month prior to Election Day.

Response: AGREE with Finding.

Explanation: All eligible registered voters are mailed a Vote-By-Mail ballot. These are distributed beginning 29 days prior to each Election Day. Enclosed with the ballot is an Identification Return Envelope, which included the registered voter's name and a unique identifying number.

F4. All envelopes must be signed by the registered voter for verification by the Registrar's Office.

Response: AGREE with finding.

F5. Many voters prefer to drop off their completed ballots at their polling places on Election Day.

Response: AGREE with finding.

- F6. Election Day workers on the north side of the County expressed frustration at not being able to get through to the Registrar's office on the cellphones they were issued. No such frustrations were reported on the south side of the County.**

Response: AGREE with finding.

Explanation: All phones have been replaced with brand new 4G cellphones for use in the March 2024 Presidential Primary Election.

- F7. Public Observer and Grand Jury Observer training and orientation procedures require clarification.**

Response: DISAGREE wholly with finding.

Explanation: The Registrar of Voters office prepares an Election Observer Panel Plan prior to every election, seeking volunteers to join. Additional invitations are sent to the Grand Jury, local Political Party Committees, Media Groups, and both Chambers of Commerce.

All observers are provided with Election Observation Guidelines, and our office provides ample opportunity for individual concerns to be addressed (*Office Hours open to Observers, regularly-monitored phone and email contacts*). When becoming an Election Observer Panel Member, each person is likewise given opportunity to observe and make suggestions on ways to improve the election process and ensure the integrity of the election.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. That the Registrar of Voters develop a training video for all poll workers that includes all aspects of polling place practices and procedures. (F-1)**

Response: DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: As previously shared, Lake County's practices mirror guidance from the Secretary of State. Production of separate resources is neither feasible nor desirable, in light of regularly-changing election laws.

- R2. That the Registrar of Voters emphasize repeatedly in its print materials the proper use of vote-by-mail ballots, including highlighting the location of the signature block on the envelop and reiterating the necessity of bringing both the envelope and ballot when voting in person. (F-3, F-4, F-5)**

Response: AGREE, Recommendation has been implemented.

- R3. That the Registrar of Voters assess the reliable connectivity of County-issued cellphones given to poll workers. (F-6)**

Response: AGREE, Recommendation has been implemented.

- R4. That the Registrar of Voters recognize the difference between Registrar-trained Election Day observers who are members of the public and Grand Jury observers. (F-7)**

Response: DISAGREE, this recommendation will not be implemented.

Explanation: All Observers adhere to standard Election Observation regulations and guidelines. This is the purview of the California Secretary of State.

The Lake County Registrar of Voters Office is grateful to the 2022-23 Lake County Civil Grand Jury for earnestly exercising their oversight responsibilities. We hope these Responses enhance public understanding.