



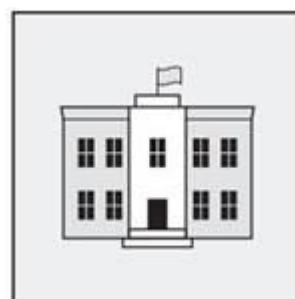
California's Voter's Choice Act: A new way of voting, A new way of voter outreach



Vote-by-mail



Ballot Dropbox



Vote Center

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Modernizing Elections.
Expanding Participation.

MAY 2018

Executive Summary:

The Voter's Choice Act (VCA) has the potential of making voting more convenient and easier for voter participation. Under the VCA, all registered voters will receive a ballot in the mail and voters have 3 choices for how to vote.

1. Vote by Mail – Voters can mail their ballot as soon as they receive it.
2. Ballot dropbox – Voters can drop off their ballot at any secure ballot dropbox.
3. Vote Center – Voters can vote in person by visiting any Vote Center starting 10 days before Election Day, and through Election Day, including weekends. Voters will be able to register and vote on the same day, even if they missed the voter registration deadline.

In order for the Voter's Choice Act to have its intended impact, of making voting more convenient, a voter must first know about the new options for voting, so that they might choose the best option for their lifestyle. The purpose of this document is not to be prescriptive or directive but to lay out some of the factors that should be considered when developing a GOTV or voter outreach plan under the Voter's Choice Act. Ultimately, it is our hope that each organization will decide what strategies and tactics work best for their organization and constituents.

This document is organized into three sections. The first section provides greater detail about the changes in the voting model under the VCA compared to a neighborhood polling place voting model. The second section provides the strategies for getting out the vote under the VCA. The third section provides changes to election law that may support your GOTV strategy.

About California Calls

California Calls is a growing alliance of 31 grassroots, community-based organizations spanning urban, rural and suburban counties across the state. Together they engage, educate and motivate new and infrequent voters among young people, from communities of color, and from poor and working class neighborhoods to make California's electorate reflect our state's diverse population.

About Future of California Elections and Voter's Choice California

Future of California Elections (FoCE) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan network of election stakeholders that includes election officials, reform advocates, and civil rights and civic engagement groups from across the state. The FoCE mission is to modernize elections and expand participation. FoCE launched the Voter's Choice California (VCC) project in Spring 2017 to support communities transitioning to the Voter's Choice Act.

Part 1: Comparing Traditional Neighborhood Polling Place Model to the Voter’s Choice Act Voting Model

Before developing any VCA outreach strategy, it is important to understand exactly how the VCA voting model will change the way people cast a ballot from the traditional polling place model. To highlight these differences, let’s take a look at a brief comparison of the rules under which a voter might traditionally cast a ballot and the new rules that the VCA brings.

	Traditional Polling Place Model	VCA Voting Model
Vote-By-Mail	Only people who request a vote-by-mail ballot will receive one	All voters receive a vote-by-mail ballot
Places to Cast a Ballot	Assigned polling location or by mail	Any Vote Center or Ballot Dropbox in the County or by mail
Likely Method of Voting	Poll Voting	More voters may vote by mail
Options for Casting a Ballot	2 ways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person at poll location • Vote-By-Mail 	3 ways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person at Vote Center • Vote-By-Mail • Ballot Dropbox Location
Time for Voting In-Person	Election Day or on specified days at county election office	Up to 11 days out from Election Day, including Election Day, at Vote Centers (expanded options up to 4 days out)
Voter Registration Deadline	Established deadline with definite cut-off	Established deadline with same-day registration up to Election Day at a vote center

The VCA is model designed to make voting more convenient by providing options that fit the lifestyle of the voter. A voter is no longer bound to a single day and limited options for voting. A voter can vote after they drop off their kids at school, at a location near work. They can vote early, or by mail, or by depositing their ballot at a drop box. A voter with a disability now has access to remote accessible vote-by-mail. A voter that is limited English proficient can visit any vote center in their county and get assistance for covered languages. The VCA is truly meeting voters where they are. However, the success of this new law is dependent on voters knowing they have options.

Be aware of assumptions that the VCA will:

- Automatically increase voter turnout
- Increase vote-by-mail usage
- Avoid long lines, voter confusion, and other complications
- Save the county money

All of these items have the potential of being true, but there must be effective implementation, comprehensive strategic planning, and robust voter education and turnout efforts by all election stakeholders, including advocates, organizations, campaigns and election officials.

Part 2: A new way of voter education and outreach

In order for a voter to successfully cast a ballot under the VCA, they must first know that they have more ways and more days to cast a ballot. Once they know their options for voting they must plan for how, when and where they will vote. As such we have outlined two main areas that an organization should consider when developing an outreach or GOTV strategy under the VCA: (1) Voter Education and (2) Developing a Vote Plan.

Voter Education

Why voter education? Voter education provides voters with knowledge of their options for voting and reduces confusion. A voter who traditionally votes at their neighborhood polling place may be confused when they open their mailbox to find an official ballot that they never requested in the mail. Likewise, a traditional poll voter will be disappointed if they visit their neighborhood polling location, only to find it is closed on election day. Accordingly, educating voters early and often can help eliminate confusion and help voters feel more confident in casting a ballot under the VCA.

Visit Voterschoice.org for samples of voter education materials, including:

- Flyers
- Call Scripts
- Social media messages

Voter education efforts can take a variety of forms, depending upon the type of programs and services an organization provides. Voter education tactics may include the following:

- Door-to-Door Canvassing
- Phone Banking
- Ballot Parties
- Community Forums
- Know Your Rights Training
- Integration with ongoing programs and services
- Flyering and tabling at events
- Newspaper ads
- Social Media
- Mass and peer-to-peer texting

We encourage you to identify what education strategies work best for your constituents. The best way to ensure voters learn about the expanded options for voting is through frequent and consistent voter education efforts by trusted messengers in their community. You may also consider providing materials and information for limited English proficient voters in the voter's native language. Our coalition, Voter's Choice California, has some translated materials at voterschoice.org.

Developing a Vote Plan

The VCA allows voters to vote anywhere in the county and offers additional days and ways to cast a ballot. This is in contrast to a traditional voting model where there is one day and one place to vote in-person. Under the traditional model of voting, strategies by community-based organizations drive voters to vote at their precinct's polling location. Under the VCA, community-based organizations must decide when they will begin voter outreach and how they can help voters decide when to vote. One way to adjust GOTV strategies to the new VCA voting model is to help voters start thinking about how they plan on voting. Helping voters develop their vote plan will ensure that voters understand their options and are choosing the most convenient option for their lifestyle.

Steps for developing a vote plan:

- 1) Ask questions
- 2) Listen
- 3) Offer options for voting based on the voter's answers
- 4) Answer questions by providing the locations, hours and options for voting. Have a map of the locations.
- 5) Let voters know there is assistance available if they have a disability and there is also language assistance for covered languages

Walking voters through a vote plan involves asking them questions about where, when, and how they plan to vote. Based on the voter's answers, you then direct the voter to the best options or locations that fit their plan. Rather than pointing voters to one specific location, you are helping the voter decide the best option for them.

Ask the following questions to help voters develop their vote plan:

- Have you received your ballot?
 - If yes, have you filled it out?
 - If no, have you contacted your election official for a replacement?
- Do you have questions about filling out your ballot?
- Do you have questions about how to return your ballot?
- Do you want to vote in-person?
 - If yes, have you thought about where and when you plan to vote?
 - If no, have you thought about where and when to return your signed ballot envelope?
- Did you know that you can have someone you trust return your ballot on your behalf? Is there someone you trust who would be willing to do that?
- Do you have everything you need to return your ballot?


Additionally, let voters know that they can vote anywhere in their county and provide them with the locations of where, when and how to vote. Let voters know that there are ways to support them if they need additional assistance for a disability or assistance in their native language. Be prepared to provide answers for the questions they are asking.

One additional item to consider as part of your vote plan is pre-paid postage. Providing postage streamlines voting by reducing the need for the voter to find a stamp. Providing postage allows voters to more easily vote-by-mail because they can hand their ballot envelope directly to their postperson or drop it off at any mail collection point in their community.

There are a few questions you should think through if your organization is interested in providing postage:

- What is your budget? How much postage can you distribute?
- To whom will you give postage? Will you give postage to all voters or only a certain subset (e.g. low-income voters, older voters, young voters, certain communities, etc.)?
- When will you start providing postage to voters? Before ballots hit mailboxes? Directly after? Closer to Election Day?
- When will you stop providing postage? Days before Election Day? Through Election Day?

If you do not provide postage, remind people to put a stamp on their envelope. Alternatively, they can drop off their ballot envelope at a ballot drop box or at a vote center where no postage is needed.



If you are doing door-to-door canvassing you should coordinate with your vendor or with your county election office about how to collect the data for your walk list. Your county election office may require a subscription to their new system.

Part 3: New laws to support your voter outreach and GOTV strategies

Collecting and Returning of Voted Ballots

In 2017, a new law (AB 1921) changed the restrictions on who can return voted ballots. Under previous rules, only a member of the voter's household could return a completed ballot. The new law changes that and allows anyone to return a voted ballot, as long as the voter has authorized that return and the envelope is signed by both parties.

Accordingly, there may be CBOs, voting rights advocacy groups, and other community centers that decide to collect and return ballots on behalf of the voters they serve. If you choose to take on this responsibility, we think there are a few questions you need to think through in ensuring your organization does not disenfranchise voters through this process. Those questions include:

- From whom should we collect ballots? Should we collect ballots from all voters or a certain subset of voters (e.g. older voters, young voters, low-income voters, etc.)?
- When should we start and stop collecting ballots from voters? Do we start when ballots first drop or as we get closer to the election? Do we stop collecting ballots a few days before Election Day or all the way through Election Day?
- When and where will we return the ballots we collect? To a vote center? To a dropbox location? Will we mail the ballots on behalf of the voters?

Answering these questions and establishing an organization policy around collecting and returning ballots will ensure you have a system in place and avoid any criminal or civil penalties for forgetting to turn in a ballot you agreed to return.

Same Day Voter Registration

Same Day Voter Registration allows voters to register to vote even after the voter registration deadline. Voters can visit any vote center in their county and vote on the same day.

Other Election Laws

There are other election reforms of which you should be aware of in developing your GOTV plan, including: (1) Motor Voter Registration, which allows those eligible to register to vote when completing certain transactions at the DMV. (2) Pre-Registration, which allows 16 and 17-year olds to pre-register to vote, so that when they turn 18 they are automatically eligible to vote. You can learn more about these election reforms and others in the 2018 Election Reform Primer found [here](#).

Voters sometimes forget if they are registered to vote. They may have registered to vote at the DMV and forgot or perhaps they pre-registered and didn't realize that now that they are 18 they can vote. A voter can check their voter registration status [here](#).

Additional Resources

California Secretary of State

Register to vote online registertovote.ca.gov

Look up voter status voterstatus.sos.ca.gov

Here you can:

- Check if you are registered to vote.
- Check where you are registered to vote.
- Check your political party preference.
- Check your language preference for election materials.
- Check the status of your vote-by-mail or provisional ballot.
- Find your polling place.
- Find information for upcoming local and state elections.
- Find contact information for your county elections office.

Future of California Elections

2018 Election Reform Primer – Provides what voters need to know about the new election reforms.

futureofcaelections.org/wp-content/uploads/ERP_32818_final.pdf

Voter's Choice California

A comprehensive website that provides information, tools and resources for voters, organizations and counties transitioning to the Voter's Choice Act.

voterschoice.org

voterschoice.org/tools-for-organizers

Here you will find:

- Flyer
- Call Scripts
- Social Media Messages
- Samples of outreach materials
- Maps of vote center and ballot drop off locations

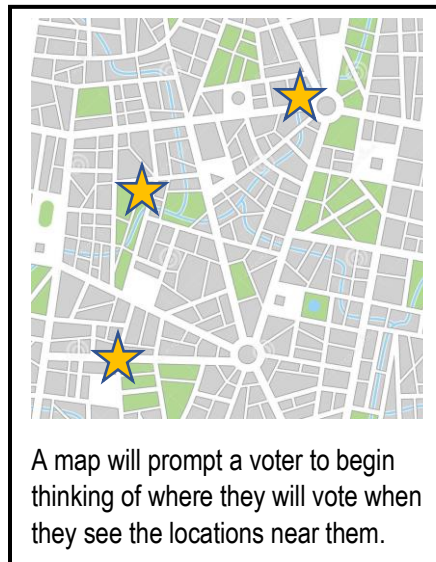
Developing a Vote Plan Summary

The VCA allows voters to vote anywhere in the county and offers additional days and ways to cast a ballot. Help voters start thinking about how they will vote by developing a vote plan that fits their life style.

Steps for developing a vote plan:

1. Ask questions
2. Listen
3. Offer options for voting based on the voter's answers
4. Answer questions by providing the locations, hours and options for voting. Have a map of the locations.
5. Let voters know there is assistance available if they have a disability and there is also language assistance for covered languages

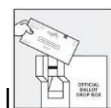
Rather than pointing voters to one specific location, you are helping the voter decide the best option for them. By starting with the question, you are engaging the voter to think about how they want to vote. Therefore, start by asking the voter a question they can relate to. For example, begin by asking if they have received their ballot. Then listen to the voter's response and answer their questions by providing the information they need to know to build their vote plan which will include a location of where to vote, what day to vote (including weekends) and how to vote.



Ask a voter how they prefer to vote. Then based on their response provide their options for casting their ballot



By Mail



At a Ballot DropBox



At a Vote Center

Sample questions to help voters develop their vote plan:

- Have you received your ballot?
 - If yes, have you filled it out?
 - If no, have you contacted your election official for a replacement?
- Do you have questions about filling out your ballot?
- Do you have questions about how to return your ballot?
- Do you want to vote in-person?
 - If yes, have you thought about where and when you plan to vote
 - If no, have you thought about where and when return your signed ballot envelope?
- Did you know that you can have someone you trust return your ballot on your behalf? Is there someone you trust who would be willing to do that?
- Do you have everything you need to return your ballot?

Finally, let voters know that they can vote anywhere in their county. Perhaps include a map to show the locations of ballot drop boxes and vote centers. If they are voting by mail, remind voters to add sufficient postage. Otherwise they can drop off their ballot envelope at a ballot drop box or at a vote center where no postage is needed.