California Secretary of State
Voter's Choice Task Force Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 24, 2026, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

1. **Welcome and Call to Order:** Co-Chair Petrina Branch called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

   Roll Call

   Task Force Members Present: Co-Chair Petrina Branch, Co-Chair Donna Linder, Matt Moreles, Gabriel Taylor, Art Tinoco, Ethan Jones, Evelyn Mendez, Brittany Stonesifer, Carrie Cornwell, Deanna Kitamura, Camila Chavez.

   Task Force Members Absent: Melvin E. Levey, Leslie Hernandez, Bob Page, Ellen Nash, Dean Logan, Jesse Salinas, Dora Rose.

   Declaration of Quorum: Elections staff confirmed that a quorum was present.

2. **Public Comment:** Co-Chair Petrina Branch opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were received.

3. **Discussion and Possible Action**: Review of the revised August 27, 2026, meeting minutes.

   Motion: Camila Chavez moved to approve the revised August 27, 2026, meeting minutes. Matt Moreles seconded the motion.

   Vote
   Ayes: Co-Chair Petrina Branch, Co-Chair Donna Linder, Matt Moreles, Gabriel Taylor, Art Tinoco, Evelyn Mendez, Brittany Stonesifer, Deanna Kitamura, Camila Chavez.
   Noes: None
   Abstentions: None
   Motion carried, 9-0.

4. **Discussion and Possible Action**: Review of the September 10, 2026, meeting minutes.

   Motion: Evelyn Mendez moved to approve September 10, 2026, meeting minutes with the following correction:

   - Camila Chavez joined the meeting after roll call.

Camilia Chavez seconded the motion.

Vote
Ayes: Co-Chair Petrina Branch, Co-Chair Donna Linder, Matt Moreles, Gabriel Taylor, Art Tinoco, Evelyn Mendez, Brittany Stonesifer, Deanna Kitamura, Camila Chavez.
Noes: None
Abstentions: None
Motion carried, 9-0.

5. **Review of CSU Sacramento Data Subcommittee:** The Task Force members provided the following edits:

On Page 4, Petrina Branch questioned the phrase, “The CSUS report focuses more heavily,” noting that “more” implies a comparison. Gabriel Taylor agreed that, if “more” is retained, the comparison should be specified.

On Page 7, Deanna Kitamura identified a typo in the second sentence under “Language-Based Voting Trends”: “requested” should be “requesting.” She also recommended using the phrase “low English proficient (LEP) voters” consistently throughout the report. Matt Moreles noted that this is the terminology used by the ROVs.

Evelyn Mendez requested that the year “2025” appear with the election date throughout the section rather than on a separate line.

Deanna Kitamura also noted inconsistent use of “non-VCA” and “non VCA” and recommended using one format consistently throughout the report.

On Page 9, Petrina Branch identified a typo in the fourth bullet point: “int” should be “in.”

In the last paragraph on Page 8, Petrina Branch noted “modest increases in turnouts,” is unclear because it does not identify what the increase is being compared to.

On Page 6, the paragraph below the table, Camila Chavez noted that the phrase “vote late,” is unclear. Gabriel Taylor, suggested revising the language to “on or closer to Election Day.” Matt Moreles supported that change.

Public Comment: Co-Chair Petrina Branch opened the floor for public comment on this section of the report. No public comments were received.

6. **Final Review of Draft "Purpose & History of the Voter's Choice Act" Section of the 2026 Primary Election Report:** The Task Force members provided the following edits:

   On Page 6, Deanna Kitamura identified a spacing issue after the footnote 5 indicator.

   On Page 7, Ethan Jones noted the "Chart 1" title appears twice. He also identified a new requirement applicable to every non-VCA county that should be reflected in the chart. Deanna Kitamura noted formatting issues in the table to be corrected. Brittany Stonesifer noted the VCA model box should state, "six days" instead of "four days."

   Public Comment: Co-Chair Petrina Branch opened the floor for public comment on this section of the report. No public comments were received.

7. **First Review of "Unusual Nature of the June 2, 2026, Statewide Primary Election (Ballot Rejection Rate and USPS Changes)":** The Task Force members provided the following edits:

   In the first sentence, Ethan Jones noted that the ballots coded for data purposes as having been returned by mail are not always actually returned by mail, which could be confusing. Brittany Stonesifer raised the same comment.

   Art Tinoco noted that the name of the election should be used consistently throughout the section as June 2, 2026, Statewide Primary Election.

   Deanna Kitamura commended the authors of the section and noted that she learned a great deal from it. She also identified a formatting issue on **Page 11,** involving "iii" subsections.

   Deanna Kitamura noted reports concerning increases in late-arriving ballots and asked whether those reports should be referenced in a footnote to this section.

   At the bottom of Page 11, Brittany Stonesifer questioned the meaning of the section title "Late-Arriving Ballots," and asked for clarification.

   On Page 12, Ethan Jones asked whether additional information was available regarding conflicting Intelligent Mail barcode data and physical information. He questioned whether either source consistently reflected an earlier mailing date, or whether differences varied by county. He noted that understanding any pattern could be useful for future policy considerations.

   Evelyn Mendez noted that in her county, some ballots contain two dates: the postmark and the date the ballot passed through the processing machine. She suggested adding this circumstance as another option under "Ambiguous

Postmarks." Deanna Kitamura further suggested that when multiple dates appear on a ballot, the earliest date be honored.

On Page 12, item 5, Gabriel Taylor noted that "additional outreach" should be more specific such as identifying whether additional mailers were sent.

On Page 13, "Recommendations for the CA State Legislature," Ethan Jones noted the last sentence of the first paragraph should clarify where ambiguity in the law is being experienced. He also cautioned that the following paragraph could imply that California has authority to direct USPS, a federal agency. and suggested revising the language. Brittany Stonesifer suggested that the state could also consider alternatives to relying on postmarks, including using the date entered by a voter next to the voter's signature on the ballot.

Public Comment: Co-Chair Petrina Branch opened the floor for public comment on this section of the report. No public comments were received.

8. **Future Agenda Items:** Co-Chair Petrina Branch invited Task Force members to propose future agenda items.

   Art Tinoco asked why the "Polling Place Model vs. VCA Model" chart had been included in the section he co-authored with Leslie Hernandez after they had previously removed it. He asked whether the chart should remain in this section, be moved elsewhere in the report, or removed entirely.

   Deanna Kitamura stated that the table was helpful. Petrina Branch noted that, because this was the final review of the section, the co-authors could determine how to address it.

   Art Tinoco stated that he and Leslie Hernandez recommend removing the chart from their section and including it elsewhere. Elections staff noted that the table could be removed from that section and included at the end of the report. Donna Linder supported that change. Deanna Kitamura also noted that she had updated the table using the new June for drop boxes and vote centers per voter, but the updated formula was not reflected at the meeting.

9. **Adjournment:** Co-Chair Petrina Branch adjourned the meeting at 2:59 p.m.