COVID-19 and Election Administration
Orange County Case Study
Election Administration under COVID-19

2 Special Elections

April 7th Westminster Recall

• Executive order after mailing out VIGs and ballots
• Retroactive outreach to voters and adjustments to operations
• Risk-limiting audit
• Recount

May 19th - Santa Ana Recall

• Executive order prior to mailing out VIGs and ballots
• Proactive outreach to voters
• More lead time to modify operations
Timeline – Westminster Recall

March 12, 2020
• Ballots mailed to voters

March 20, 2020
• Governor issues Executive Order N-34-20 to cancel in-person voting

March 25, 2020
• Supplemental VIGs and postcards mailed to voters with COVID-19 in-person voting closure information
Postcards

Mailed to all Westminster voters in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean

Front
• Large and bold URGENT NOTICE

Back
• In-person voting closure explanation, voting options, and how to receive more information
Press Release

- Posted on website
- Translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean
- Forwarded to local press outlets
Updated Letter in VIG

Supplemental VIGs included an updated letter that highlighted:

- Cancellation of in-person voting in **RED bold text**.

- Modification of voting options for ballot return only

- Reminder that return envelopes have pre-paid postage
Website

• Homepage button to direct voters to relevant information

• Landing Page with links to:
  • Press Release
  • Postcard
  • Election Results
  • Dates, Deadlines, and More
  • Important Legal Documents
  • Voter Information Guide
  • Emergency Ballot
  • Ballots Issued and Returned Data
NOTICE OF VOTE CENTER CLOSURE

Effective: March 28, 2020 - April 7, 2020

For questions and options for casting your ballot please call 714-567-7600, or visit ocvote.com

Additional details on the Special Westminster Recall Election and options for casting your ballot can be found at ocvote.com/westminster

Vote Center Closure Signs
In-Person Voting

Number of voters served:
- 45 total; 30 on Election Day
- Mostly CVRs; few made appointments

Challenges:
- Cold and rainy weather
- Limited canopies
- One voter served at a time
- Many voters were seniors that could not stand in line for extended periods
Risk-Limiting Audit

- Conducted RLA as a post-election audit in lieu of 1PMT
- No public access; livestreamed online from beginning to end
- Additional IT setup required for sufficient camera and audio coverage
- Minor connectivity issues – ROV and from viewers at home
Left to right:
1) Tracking numbers rolled on a poster sheet
2) Closeup of dice to show number rolled
3) Utilize RLA tool to generate ballot manifest
Recount

- Request for recount received on Tuesday, April 21
- Elections Code and CA Recount Regulations requires “physical access to any and all relevant materials”
- No exceptions for a health emergency / pandemic
- Recount commenced on Tuesday, April 28
Preparations for Recount

• Maintain closure to general public
• N-95 masks for staff
• Sneeze guards at front counters for public to check in
• Designed recount space and front lobby to maximize social distancing
• Video coverage for overflow
Timeline – Santa Ana Recall

April 9, 2020
Governor issued Executive Order N-20-48 to cancel in-person voting

April 12, 2020
Mailed out VIGs and vote-by-mail packets

May 5, 2020
In-person voting is available
Executive order issued prior to mailing of VIGs and ballots

Prepared two VIGs depending on Governor’s decision

Modified cover, letter, and internal pages to reflect in-person voting closure

Available in English and DOJ languages
Top right banner:
“IN-PERSON VOTING CLOSED! COVID-19 DETAILS INSIDE”

Middle banner:
“IMPORTANT COVID-19 NOTICE! IN-PERSON VOTING CLOSED”

Bottom row of icons
Removed Vote Center icon for in-person voting
Voter Information Guide Inside Cover

- Reiterated why this election will be conducted as a mail ballot only election

- Directed voters to COVID-19 notice and website for more information
Important Notice

- Included inside all VIGs under Table of Contents

- Emailed to all Santa Ana voters on May 5th

- Translated notices provided to voters with language needs
  - Spanish
  - Vietnamese
  - Chinese
  - Korean
Vote-by-Mail Insert

- Included in vote-by-mail packet mailed to every voter

- Messaging:
  - Explain why in-person voting is closed
  - Encourage vote-by-mail voting
  - Multiple options to return ballot
  - Call or visit website for more information

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person voting has been closed – vote at home with multiple options to return your ballot!

Your option for voting in this election is to vote at home using your vote-by-mail ballot.

See reverse for options to return your ballot.

Options for Returning Your Vote-by-Mail Ballot

Did you know that vote-by-mail ballots are among the first ballots to be counted and reported on Election Night? Every vote-by-mail ballot is processed and counted, regardless of the type of election.

Mail or drop off your ballot:
- Mail: Mail your ballot on or before Election Day (no postage required). For mail box locations visit ocvote.com/mail
- Drop off: Deposit your ballot into a secure drop box located in the City of Santa Ana. For locations visit ocvote.com/dropbox

Click ocvote.com  Call 714-567-7600 for help  Enjoy your “I Voted!” sticker
Vote-by-Mail Processing

- Began processing VBMs on Tuesday, May 5th
- Social distancing implemented
- Sanitary equipment provided such as gloves, tissues, hand sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes
NOTICE OF VOTE CENTER CLOSURE

Effective:
May 9, 2020 - May 19, 2020

For questions and options for casting your ballot please call 714-567-7600, or visit ocvote.com

Additional details on the Santa Ana Special Recall Election and options for casting your ballot can be found at ocvote.com/santa-ana
Website

• Homepage button to direct voters to relevant information

• Landing Page with links to:
  • Press Release
  • Postcard
  • Election Results
  • Dates, Deadlines, and More
  • Important Legal Documents
  • Voter Information Guide
  • Emergency Ballot
  • Ballots Issued and Returned Data
Ballot Drop Box Pick-Up

• Per State regulations, pick up of ballots must be handled by two members for accountability

• Previously done in one vehicle for a team of two

• To maintain social distancing, two vehicles now needed
Steps for In-Person Voting

• Voters begin by lining up with 6 ft. separation

• Utilize phone to notify staff

• Staff will process voter

• Voter can vote with a paper ballot in a voting booth or with a ballot-marking device
In-Person Voting
Lessons Learned from Special Elections

Past implementation of VCA critical to voters already having experience with all voters receiving a VBM ballot and availability of ballot drop boxes

- 80% of voters voted by mail in March 2020 and 18% of voters who voted by mail returned via ballot drop box in March 2020

Proactive outreach to voters via mail, website, etc. and in-language materials for voters with language needs

Minimize confusion by only sending out information once finalized

Plan ahead by examining all processes and procedures from start to finish that need to be modified
Challenges for November 2020

**Voters**
- Many voters wait until the last minute to vote
- Last-minute voters typically need same-day voter registration, which takes longer
- Minimum requirements (i.e., will election officials have to provide masks to voters without masks?)

**Logistics**
- Limited availability of Vote Center locations and training sites
- Recruitment, interviewing, and onboarding of Vote Center staff
- Inventory of PPE and sanitizing supplies to maintain safe working environments
Planning for November 2020

- CACEO Recommendations to Governor Newsom
- Statewide November 2020 Election Task Force
- SOS-CACEO Conference Calls
- Orange County Plans and Preparations
Pending Legislation

**AB 860 (Berman)**
- Requires a vote-by-mail ballot to be mailed to all voters in CA
- Urgency statute
- Governor issued Executive Order N-64-20 to mail a vote-by-mail ballot to all voters on May 8th

**SB 423 (Umberg)**
- 1 in-person voting location for every 10,000 voters and open for 4 days (including Election Day) & 1 ballot drop off location for every 15,000 voters
- State to provide assistance for acquiring voting locations and staffing and PPE and disinfectant
- Statewide voter education
THANK YOU!