25th Annual National Conference
San Diego, California

2009 Professional Practices Program

Vote by Mail
Easy, Safe, Convenient, and Secure

Santa Clara County, California

Submitted by:
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Vote by Mail—Easy, Convenient, Safe, and Secure

For the November 2008 Presidential Election, Santa Clara County had an 86% turnout—the highest in 40 years. Our first election night results report at 8:01 p.m. reported 327,779 Vote by Mail ballots, over 48% of the total cast for the election. In fact, over 69% of the total ballots counted were Vote by Mail ballots. Of the 537,000 ballots issued by mail, 70.88% were returned. We had no lines at the polls and voters were pleased. How did we do it? I will tell you how…..

In 2002, California law changed to enable any registered voter to become a Permanent Vote by Mail (PVBM) Voter. Our Santa Clara County realized the benefits of voting by mail—more options for our busy voters, reduced lines at the polls, and increased turnout. By the end of 2002, our county went from 9,055 to 26,800 PVBM voters. The total climbed to over 210,000 by the end of 2006. In 2007, Santa Clara County set a goal to have 400,000 Permanent Vote by Mail Voters by the end of 2008. Through extensive outreach and marketing campaigns, the actual total has reached over 500,000 or 64% of our 790,000 registered voters.

As the chart below indicates, the number of Permanent Vote by Mail Voters has increased by 280% since 2004. The number of ballots cast via Vote by Mail has increased by 254% and the percentage of total votes cast has increased by 227%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>PVBM Voters</th>
<th>VBM Ballots Cast</th>
<th>% of Total Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002 Gub. General</td>
<td>26,800</td>
<td>73,340</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 Pres. General</td>
<td>152,986</td>
<td>184,306</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Gub. General</td>
<td>206,490</td>
<td>198,225</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Pres. Primary</td>
<td>406,330</td>
<td>281,817</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Pres. General</td>
<td>427,114</td>
<td>467,725</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes one-time election Vote by Mail, Overseas, and Military ballots cast

Vote by Mail Applications and Surveys
We started out slowly, first with the Permanent Vote by Mail check box on our Sample Ballot and Voter Information Pamphlet, applications on the back cover, as well as distributing application cards at outreach activities, Citizenship and Immigration Services Ceremonies, polling places, and of course on our front counter.

In April of 2007, the ROV began a PVBM campaign by mailing business reply post cards to all non-PVBM voters. Our first mailing had a picture of flag-covered mailbox and a picture of an employee’s wife with her feet up in slippers, relaxing by a fire “No lines, no parking, no rush, no worries! Next Election Relax and Vote at Home.”
In December of 2007 we began advertising on buses. (An example of an ad is the banner at the top of this document). The next two mailings used “Easy, Convenient, Safe and secure”. Participate in 2008. Vote by Mail.” The last mailing was sent out in 2008 had the heading “Why wait in line November 4? Vote by Mail.”

The county continues its Permanent Vote by Mail outreach efforts and is currently on its phase six mailing campaign, which is entitled “Make it Easy on Yourself, Vote by Mail. It’s safe and secure”. We currently have more than 505,600 PVBM voters.

**Vote by Mail-Return Options**

Now that we had so many people signed up to be Permanent Vote by Mail voters, we needed to provide a positive voter experience. The primary objective was to give voters options on how to return their voted ballots. Past elections have indicated that approximately 20% of VBM voters waited until Election Day to return their ballots. Many still wanted to enjoy the experience of going to a polling place, or just did not want to mail their ballot. Of course some voters just procrastinated until it was too late to mail the ballot. Hand-delivering them to an Election Official was what people wanted.

Thus evolved the “Vote by Mail Return Centers”. Located at all of our 15 city halls, the county government center, and of course the ROV box at our office’s campus. The weekend prior to the election, we also had staff at 5 sites throughout the county where voters could drive in and deliver their voted ballots. Over 10,000 ballots were received at these sites for the 2008 Presidential Election. In order to expedite the processing of voters at the polls, we created a new position called the Voter Courtesy Officer. This person greeted voters in line and determined if any were returning their voted ballots. If so, the officer made sure the envelope was signed and completed properly and then accepted the ballot and deposited it in the ballot box. If the line was long, the person went out and used our “Reggie the Bear Vote by Mail Bag” to receive the ballots.

**Where is my Sticker?**

To resolve the “I don’t get an “I Voted” sticker when I vote by mail issue, our vendor attaches them to the top of the Instructions to Voters, which is included in the VBM Ballot Packet. Voters appreciate them. Some people proudly wore them attached to their employee identification badges!

**Conclusion**

With over 64%, of it’s voters signed up to be Permanent Vote by Mail Voters, we have the highest percentage in the state with more than 100,000 registered voters. We are proud of our outreach and innovations to ensure voters like voting by mail and more will sign up so we can reach our goal of 550,000 by the end of 2009 and 600,000 by the end of 2010.
Vote by Mail Examples
County of Santa Clara, California

**2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

ARE YOU PREPARED TO VOTE?

**VOTING BY MAIL**

*Vote by mail ballots must be received by 8pm Election Day, November 4th.*

*Apply 59 cents to blue return envelopes, Green Mail Ballot Precinct envelopes are postage paid.*

*You can return your Vote by Mail ballot by mail, at any polling place on election day, or at any of the drop-off locations listed in the column to the right.*

**BEFORE YOU VOTE**

*Read your Sample Ballot & Voter Information Pamphlet carefully, your assigned polling place location is on the back.*

*Remove ballot pages from the center and mark your choices.*

*Bring pamphlet and ballot pages with you to vote.*

*When voting, make sure to connect the arrow pointing to your candidate and measure choices with one thin line.*

**DROP-OFF LOCATIONS**

- Registrar of Voters Office: 1652 Borgia Drive, Building 2, San Jose
  - There is a white 24-hour drop box located near the flag pole in the parking lot.
- Any City Hall / City Clerks Office: during normal business hours through Election
- County Government Center: during normal business hours through Election Day 701 W.
  - Hedding St., San Jose, 1st Floor, outside of Board Chambers

**WEEKEND RETURN SITES**

- Saturday, November 1 - Sunday, November 2
- 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Eastridge Mall
- VTA Park and Ride
- Great Mall
- VTA Park and Ride
- Mopark
- VTA Park and Ride
- Page Mill Road
- F Tta Park and Ride
- Nob Hill Center
- 777 First Street, Gilroy

For additional information contact Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters at 866-430-VOTE [8683] or visit sccvote.org

Newspaper ad for November Election.

**RETURN YOUR VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT HERE**

Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters

Vote by Mail Weekend Return Site Sign
Why wait in line November 4th?

Vote by Mail Q and A

Q: Will my vote count?
A: Yes, every valid Vote by Mail ballot will be counted. You can track the status of your returned Vote by Mail ballot online at sccvote.org or by calling the Registrar of Voters Office.

Q: Is it secure?
A: Yes. The signature on the back of the return envelope is compared with the voter’s original signature on the registration form to ensure that an unauthorized person can not complete and return another voter’s ballot.

Q: Do I have to mail it?
A: No, you can deliver your ballot to the Registrar of Voters Office or place it in the white 24-hour drop box located near the flagpole. You can also take your ballot to any Santa Clara County polling place on Election Day or to any city hall before or on Election Day. Visit sccvote.org for a complete list of drop-off locations.

Permanent Vote by Mail Application

Signing this form will make you a Permanent Vote by Mail Voter. A ballot will automatically be mailed to you for future elections. Failure to vote in two (2) consecutive statewide general elections will cancel your Permanent Vote by Mail status; however, it will not cancel your voter registration.

X

Signature                               Date

(408) 299-VOTE (8683)                  Santa Clara County
(866) 430-VOTE (8683)                  Registrar of Voters
Fax: (408) 293-6002                     1555 Berger Drive, Bldg. 2
www.sccvote.org                         P.O. Box 1740
San Jose, CA 95109-1740

Postcard Application Sent to all Non-Permanent Vote by Mail Registered Voters
Graphic for 4th run of VTA Bus advertising

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