

Future of California Elections Conference

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Election Reforms: What Should We Prioritize for 2013 and Beyond?

Presentation by Kim Alexander

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California has none of the barriers other states impose on registration and voting – yet we rate in the bottom among states in turnout. Why?

- **CA 2012 eligible voter turnout: 55% in a recent George Mason University study, in 45th place among the states, tied with Tennessee. Only Hawaii, Oklahoma, Indiana, Texas and West Virginia had lower turnout.**
- **The highest eligible voter turnout was in Minnesota (76%), followed by Wisconsin (73%).**
- **What is it going to take move California from 55% to 75% turnout? To increase presidential election voter turnout from 13 million to 18 million?**

Improve vote-by-mail process so more ballots are successfully cast and counted

- In the 2012 Primary, 7.7 million VBMS were mailed out but less than half - 3.5 million - were returned.
- CA Vote-by-Mail error rate is 2% – the same error rate seen in Votomatic voting machines that led to their decertification.

In 2008, 130,730 VBM ballots were received by counties but not counted because they arrived too late, were not properly signed or other voter error. With a total 5.7 million VBMS cast and counted, this “not counted” rate equals 2.2 percent of all the VBM ballots returned.

- Changing the law to allow ballots postmarked by Election Day to be counted could significantly increase overall voter turnout.

Online at www.calvoter.org:

policy brief

California Voter Foundation



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Modernizing California's Voting Technology: A Look Back, A Look Ahead

By Kim Alexander
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This policy brief was developed in collaboration with the Future of California Elections (FoCE), a diverse, nonpartisan coalition of California election administrators, reform advocates and leaders of civil rights organizations working together to increase voter participation and improve the effectiveness of elections in California, with support from the James Irvine Foundation. The author wishes to acknowledge and thank

Challenges for the L.A. County Voting Systems Assessment Project:

- Limitations on uses of Prop. 41 and HAVA funds
- Lack of detailed, written guidelines for the state's voting system approval process
- State law prohibits any jurisdiction from entering into a contract for a voting system unless it has already received approval from the SoS
- Federal certification required; uncertainty about the future of the EAC
- Cost of federal certification and state approval – estimated to be \$2.5 million, costs borne by vendors, assumed they will recoup these costs

Some Policy Questions to Consider:

- How can testing and certification be made more accessible to not-for-profit voting systems?**
- Should changes be made to state law to allow Los Angeles County to use its voting modernization bond funds to develop a new, not-for-profit voting system?**
- Are there different approaches to certification and testing, such as states collaboratively testing equipment, that would be more efficient and economical than having California go it alone?**



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