



February 23, 2023

Via Email, ClerkoftheBoard@co.shasta.ca.us

4 pages total

The Honorable Kevin Crye
The Honorable Tim Garman
The Honorable Patrick Jones
The Honorable Chris Kelstrom
The Honorable Mary Rickert

Shasta County Board of Supervisors
1450 Court Street, Suite 308B
Redding, CA 96001-1673

Re: January 2023 vote to terminate County's voting system contract

Dear Supervisors Crye, Garman, Jones, Kelstrom and Rickert:

We are writing to you about your 3-2 vote on January 24, 2023, to end the County's contract with its current voting system vendor. We are a group of nonprofit, nonpartisan, California-based organizations dedicated to ensuring that secure and accessible voting systems are available to all California voters.

We urge you to reevaluate this decision and carefully consider the difficulties Shasta County and its voters are likely to face from a hasty decision to terminate the current voting system contract without a well-considered plan for an alternative voting system that is ready to be implemented as soon as the current contract ends following the special election on March 7, 2023.

While Election Day for the next statewide election is still a year away, preparing for it requires months of careful planning. Additionally, that March 2024 election is a statewide presidential

primary, arguably the most complicated of all elections, since voters' choices are restricted by party in the presidential contest, while other contests on the ballot are open to all voters regardless of party. Ordinary preparations for a statewide presidential primary election already are substantial without adding the enormous challenges of procuring a new voting system, testing the equipment, and training staff and poll workers to properly deploy it. Preparations must be completed no later than late 2023 for ballots to be provided to military and overseas voters, as required by law, beginning in January 2024.

In addition to the unknown fiscal impact of your decision, we urge you to consider the following unintended consequence: Switching your county's voting system so close to a major election could result in numerous otherwise avoidable errors and administrative problems that could, in turn, erode public trust in the county's voting processes, undermining the stated intent behind the Board's initial decision. This risk is heightened by the potential for one or more additional special elections in 2023, which could dramatically shorten the amount of time the County has to make all necessary arrangements.

We are also deeply concerned that the right of people with disabilities to vote privately and independently will be compromised by this process. Their needs will be unmet not only if the County fails to have another voting system in place prior to the next election but also if elections staff and poll workers do not have sufficient training on a new voting system to be able to instruct voters on how to use accessible equipment. The signatories of this letter endorse the sentiments expressed in the February 6, 2023, statement issued by Disability Rights California, and we implore you to consider the needs of voters with disabilities when contemplating such a significant change.¹

Providing accessible voting equipment is required under both federal and state law; no jurisdiction in the country is exempt from this requirement. Counties are also required by federal and state law to provide access to ballots and election materials in additional languages based on county Census data.²

Like you, our organizations share a desire for free and fair elections that are secure and accessible. We ask that you reconsider whether your January 2023 decision is likely to result in a use of public resources that will best meet those goals. Any decision of this kind must be made based on guidance from experienced elections professionals, including your own current registrar of voters, who understand and comply with the laws, regulations, and procedures that are in place to ensure that the use of voting systems is safe, secure, and accessible.

While questions about the trustworthiness of computerized voting systems have been raised, California has robust election security laws already in place. In fact, some of our organizations have worked successfully to strengthen California's election security laws by requiring voter-verified paper ballots and post-election audits. As President Ronald Reagan famously once said, "Trust, but verify."³

Indeed, what California elections officials do is verify the vote. California's voting systems are governed by numerous state requirements that facilitate accurate and verifiable election results. California law requires counties to conduct a public hand recount for every contest in at least one percent of its precincts, selected at random after each election to examine the accuracy of the software vote count. Some counties carry out additional risk-limiting audits to further check for correctness. All California voting systems must go through rigorous source code, hardware, volume, functional, telecommunications, privacy, usability, and accessibility testing before they are certified and available for purchase and deployment. These test results are publicly available on the California Secretary of State's web site.⁴

It is noteworthy that the general public's view is that elections are carried out with integrity. A Marist National Poll conducted shortly before the November 2022 midterm election found that three-quarters of Americans were confident in their state or local government to carry out a fair and accurate election.⁵

Thank you for carefully considering the concerns we have expressed. If you would like to connect with any of us, we are happy to be available to you. Please reach out if you would like to discuss the matter further.

Sincerely,

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Cc: The Honorable Dr. Shirley Weber, California Secretary of State
The Honorable Rob Bonta, California Attorney General
The Honorable Steve Glazer, Chair, California State Senate Elections Committee
The Honorable Isaac Bryan, Chair, California State Assembly Elections Committee
The Honorable Ryan Ronco, President, California Association of Clerks & Elections Officials
The Honorable Cathy Darling Allen, Clerk Recorder/Registrar of Voters, Shasta County, California

¹ disabilityrightsca.org/latest-news/statement-voters-with-disabilities-in-shasta-county-may-be-left-with-no-option-for

² sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/language-requirements

³ wikipedia.org/wiki/Trust,_but_verify

⁴ sos.ca.gov/elections/ovsta/voting-technology-vendors

⁵ maristpoll.marist.edu/polls/2022-midterm-elections/