



## Memorandum

**To:** Elections Commission  
**From:** John Arntz, Director  
**Date:** January 12, 2024  
**RE:** Director's Report: January 17, 2024, Elections Commission Meeting

Following is a brief listing of the work and related information in which the Department of Elections (Department) has been engaged since the previous report issued in relation to the Elections Commission meeting on December 12, 2023.

### I. The Department has been preparing to provide all necessary materials and services for the March 5 election.

- A. The Department has been collaborating with the Sheriff's Prisoner Legal Services unit to facilitate its Incarcerated Voting Program (IVP) for the March 5 election. Through this program, the Department provides tailored outreach materials, registration forms, and ballots to eligible San Franciscans involved in the justice system.
- B. On Wednesday, January 17, the Department will begin the Logic and Accuracy equipment testing for the March 5 election. This testing is performed prior to each election to ensure that the equipment properly records and accurately tabulates all votes, and is open to public observation in person or via live stream on the Department's website.
- C. The Department has finished laying out and proofing all versions (party, language, ballot type) of the March two-card ballot. The combination of all these elements necessitated the Department to produce 210 ballot versions.
  - i. Ballot instructions for no party preference voters (NPP) who requested a ballot with a presidential contest will explain that their ballot reflects that request, as well as how to get a different party's ballot.
  - ii. Ballot instructions for NPP voters with no request on file for a ballot with a presidential contest will explain why no such contest is listed on their ballot, as well as how to get any party's ballot instead.
  - iii. Ballot instructions for voters registered with a preference for the American Independent, Green, Libertarian, or Peace and Freedom parties will explain why no county central committee contest is included: *This ballot does not include a county central committee or county council contest because the number of seats exceeds the number of candidates or because the party has chosen to hold meetings in lieu of using a public ballot.*
  - iv. Ballot instructions for all voters will explain where they can find information about proponents and opponents of each local ballot measure: *For information about proponents and opponents of each local ballot measure, refer to your Voter Information Pamphlet starting on page 36 or visit [voterguide.sfelections.org](http://voterguide.sfelections.org).*
- D. The Department has been preparing to transmit voter roll extracts to its ballot printing and assembly vendor so the vendor can begin assembling vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot packets.
  - i. The Department will transmit ballots to the approximately 10,000 San Francisco voters serving in the military or residing overseas no later than January 20 via their selected method of delivery (email, postal mail, or fax).
  - ii. The Department is on schedule to mail VBM packets to nearly 500,000 registered voters by February 5.

- E. The Department has finalized all versions of the March 2024 Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP).
  - i. The Department is on schedule to distribute VIPs to voters in early February, concurrent with VBM packets.
  - ii. Similar to VBM packets, VIPs will be tailored to recipient ballot type and party and language preferences.
  - iii. In developing the March 5 VIP, the Department re-wrote most editable pages to achieve a fifth-grade reading level and made formatting changes, including adding more white space and transitioning from single column to double column text, in order to improve readability.
- F. The Department has secured the 501 facilities necessary to host all requisite neighborhood polling places on Election Day, each of which will provide in-person voting and ballot drop-off services.
- G. The Department has been preparing for early voting to commence on February 5 at the City Hall Voting Center. The City Hall Voting Center will serve as a central polling place for all City residents, offering multilingual personal assistance and accessible voting equipment, along with pick up, drop off, and replacement ballot service.
- H. The Department is prepared to open 37 ballot drop boxes across the City on February 5.
  - i. All of these boxes will remain open 24/7 through the close of polls on Election Day.
  - ii. For this election, in accordance with new state law, the Department opened three new ballot drop boxes on college campuses: UC College of Law, SF State, and UCSF.
- I. The Department is working to secure the services of the over 2,000 volunteers necessary to staff each of the City's 501 polling places with at least one Inspector and two Clerks in the upcoming election.
  - i. To date, the Department has recruited over 1,000 poll workers and plans to continue its poll worker recruitment efforts through February.
  - ii. These efforts include distribution of flyers at community events and job fairs, mail and email notifications to voters, placement of newspaper ads, posting of messages via social media accounts, collaboration with public and private schools, and the inclusion of a recruitment ad in the March 2024 Voter Information Pamphlet.
- J. To prepare poll workers for their Election Day service, the Department will launch its poll worker training program.
  - i. In February, the Department will offer its training classes online, at City Hall, and at various off-site locations.
  - ii. The training course focuses on 1) providing equitable service to voters of all backgrounds and ethnicities, 2) protecting the right of every voter to freely cast a secret ballot without any interference, and 3) safeguarding election fairness and integrity by securing all voter data, voting equipment, and voted ballots.
  - iii. The training course also covers 1) proper setup and operation of voting equipment, 2) processing of voters, 3) de-escalation techniques that may prove useful when a voter becomes agitated or creates a potential disruption at a polling place, and 4) custody procedures for voted ballots and other election materials.

**II. The Department continues to provide voter outreach and education to communities across the City.**

- A. This month, the Department sent a mailer to every household in San Francisco—approximately 380,000 in all. The notice is meant to encourage recipients to participate in the upcoming election, to provide a few important reminders

and help voters get ready for the election, and to remind recipients that the Department remains available to provide assistance.

- B. The Department executed contracts with and conducted training for its 13 outreach grantees.
  - i. The training began with an introduction to the official messages and materials grantees will need to use to meet the grant program's primary objectives: 1) to disseminate information about the March 5 election to members of focus populations; 2) to increase local voter registration rates in at least one of the same populations; and 3) to promote civic engagement by recruiting San Franciscans to serve as poll workers.
  - ii. During this first part of training, the Department provided a comprehensive overview of outreach materials, both digital and hard-copy, and highlighted ways in which organizations could utilize them to meet each of the grant objectives. Grantees also viewed a presentation which covered rules for distributing and collecting registration cards – tasks in which all organizations will be involved – in compliance with relevant laws.
  - iii. The second part of training covered the processes and schedules for submitting invoices to the Department, along with descriptions and examples of both eligible and ineligible reimbursable expenses.
  - iv. In the third part of training, the Department introduced the Grantee Activity Report, a template that serves as a means for organizations to report on their monthly outreach activities. In the Report, organizations provide statistics on the number of recent events conducted and people reached, describe significant achievements and any challenges over the last month, and share plans for the upcoming month.
  - v. The fourth and final part of training involved a one-on-one, in-person meeting between a representative from each of the grantee organizations and a member of the Department's outreach team, allowing them to ask questions and receive individualized guidance. They also obtain their materials at this time.
  - vi. Grantees began their outreach activities on January 4 and will continue through March 5.
- C. The Department designed its March outreach campaign to reach the potential local voters who might be less engaged with recent elections. The tone of this campaign is meant to connect voting in the March election to practical matters affecting peoples' day-to-day lives. Ads feature three related statements -- 1) I vote for my community. 2) I vote for my family, and 3) I vote for my future. – and include images of people engaged in work, school, or family activities. These ads will be featured on the exterior of approximately 200 Muni buses, targeting both pedestrians and commuters, billboards across the City, and on the filler pages of the March 5 Voter Information Pamphlet.

### **III. The Department continues to work on numerous short, mid, and long-term administrative projects.**

- A. The Department continues hiring and onboarding of the approximately 200 temporary employees required to assist with the conduct of the March 5 election.
  - i. Last month, on December 8, the Department held an Employment and Volunteer Opportunities Fair.
  - ii. The Fair served as a convenient one-stop shop for scores of job seekers, with people applying, interviewing, receiving a conditional offer of employment, and beginning the onboarding process, all in a single day.

- iii. The event was successful and attracted a diverse group of job seekers, including immigrants, retirees, people with prior criminal history, and youth enrolled in Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (a program administered by SFUSD), as well as many people interested in public service.
  - iv. In a span of five hours, over 150 people attended the Fair. Of those, 74 people were interviewed, 50 received an offer of employment and began the onboarding process, and 12 joined the poll worker team.
  - v. In response to the fair's positive results and the positive feedback from attendees, the Department plans to incorporate similar fairs into its hiring practices going forward.
- B. On October 31, 2023, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 526-23, "urging the Department of Elections to report back on the implementation of Assembly Bill No. 57 (Low) for the 2024 elections in relation to establishing the state election law requirement that candidates demonstrate the usage of a Chinese-character based name for the two years prior to filing nomination papers (see Attachment 1).
- i. Assembly Bill No. 57 is now codified as California Elections Code Section 13211.7 and requires candidates to verify use of a Chinese-character based name for two years.
  - ii. San Francisco Municipal Elections Code (MEC) Section 401 which requires Chinese-character based names to appear on the ballot for each local office and does not specify a timeframe for candidates to indicate their use of a Chinese-character based name.
  - iii. The Department consulted with the City Attorney's Office to resolve the ambiguity between the two laws and was able to adopt a policy that set a reasonable standard of two years for candidates to demonstrate their use of a Chinese-character based name (see Attachment 2).
  - iv. For candidates who were given Chinese-character based names at birth, the Department implemented two declarations under the penalty of perjury for candidates to complete and submit to the Department.
    - a. One declaration allows family members to attest a candidate was given the name at birth.
    - b. The second declaration allows candidates to self-attest that they were given a Chinese-character based name at birth and that the candidate cannot obtain the signature of a family member and also cannot provide documentation to verify that the candidate received the name.
  - v. The Department did not restrict or change the types of documents that candidates could submit and MEC Section 401 does not limit the types of documents that candidates can provide to the Department to substantiate the candidates' use of a Chinese-character based name.
- C. As required by the San Francisco Charter §13.103.5, the Department developed an Election Plan for the March 2024, 2024 election (Attachment 3).
- i. This Election Plan provides detailed information about the Department's plans to conduct the March 5 election in a manner that is free, fair, and functional and highlights several new practices and enhancements to existing programs and processes in effect for the upcoming election.

- D. The Department prepared a waiver from the prohibition imposed by the San Francisco Charter § 13.104.5, to permit City employees —working as poll workers— to assist the Department with the conduct of the March 5 election (Attachment 4).
- i. The City Charter prohibits City employees and officers from performing "any function relating to the conduct of an election". The Charter further authorizes the Board of Supervisors, upon the request of the Elections Commission, to waive this prohibition to permit city employees to assist the Department with an election.
- E. The Department is presently compiling its budget proposals for the FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 cycles.
- i. Given that the City projects a \$200.8 million deficit for FY 2023-24 and a \$527.5 million deficit for FY 2024-25, a combined two-year deficit of \$728.3 million, the Mayor's Office directed all departments with a need for General Fund funding to make reductions to help address the shortfall. More specifically, such departments must reduce their General Fund support by 5% in FY 2023-24 and 8%, ongoing, in FY 2024-25.
  - ii. The Department is currently reviewing all of its projected expenses and revenues in both FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 with the goal of identifying savings while maintaining an excellent level of service delivery.
  - iii. The Department will submit its draft budget proposals to the Elections Commission by January 30, 2024.
  - iv. In accordance with SFAC §3.3, these new budget proposals must be reviewed at two public meetings, with the first occurring at least 15 days before the one in which the Commission can approve the same proposals.

#### **IV. Responses to the Commission's request for information to be included in the Director's monthly report.**

*Data on registration rates and outreach events: 1) Total new registrations, 2) New registrations by supervisory districts, 3) Tactics employed (outreach, community engagement, grant funding, etc.) and in which districts, 4) Tactics employed by districts.*

- A. Between December 1 – December 31, the Department processed affidavits for 2,118 new registrants, residing in the following supervisorial districts: Supervisorial District (SD) 1 – 187, SD 2 – 233, SD 3 – 199, SD 4 – 134, SD 5 – 260, SD 6 – 228, SD 7 – 157, SD 8 – 225, SD 9 – 187, SD 10 – 164, SD 11 – 144.
- B. Between December 1 – December 31, the Department conducted 11 outreach events; which had approximately 1,350 people in attendance collectively. The number of such events by Supervisorial District was: SD 3 – 3, SD 5 – 2, SD 6 – 2, SD 7 – 1, SD 9 – 2, SD 10 – 1

*Members of the public may access, at any time, up-to-date datasets relevant to the Commission's requests for information by visiting the Department's EData page at [sfelections.org/edata](https://sfelections.org/edata). The Department recently expanded this page to include additional datasets, including numbers of new registration applications processed per district and outreach events conducted per district.*

## V. Material Distribution by the Commission.

With the recent inquiry by the Election Commission as to how commissioners might assist the Department with its outreach, the Department prepared election packets with materials that Commissioners may choose to distribute through commissioners' chosen platforms. Each packets contains materials listed below; commissioners may request additional materials from the Department and in other languages (Chinese, Spanish, and/or Filipino).

- Voter Registration Form (x15)
- March 5, 2024 Presidential Primary Election Poster (x5)
- March 5, 2024 Presidential Primary Election Flyer (x10)
- Justice-Involved Voter Flyer (x5)
- No Fixed Address Voter Card (x5)
- Poll Worker Application (x15)
- Map showing areas of the city with lower per capita populations of registered voters. (Precincts with registration rates below 40% and 50% are shaded blue and green respectively.) Commissioners may use this map to inform their outreach.