



Memorandum

To: Elections Commission
From: John Arntz, Director
Date: February 9, 2024
RE: Director's Report: February 14, 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 January 17, 2024.

I. The Department has been preparing to provide the City's full array of voting services for the March 5 election.

- A. The Department mailed nearly 500,000 vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot packets to local voters.
- i. Through February 20, the Department will mail additional ballot packets to new registrants on a rolling basis. Through February 29, the Department will mail replacement ballots (e.g., crossover ballots) on a rolling basis. After February 29, when it is too late to mail a ballot, the Department will direct voters to obtain ballots at the Voting Center, through the online accessible vote-by-mail system, or at a polling place on Election Day.
- B. On February 5, the Department made several additional voting methods available to local voters.
- i. The Department opened its accessible vote-by-mail system (AVBM). Using AVBM, any registered local voter can download and mark their VBM ballot, using a screen-reader or personal assistive technology, such as a head-pointer or sip and puff. (For security, AVBM does not transmit vote data over the internet.)
 - ii. The Department opened its City Hall Voting Center where any eligible resident can register to vote and any local voter can update their registration record and/or cast a paper, touchscreen, or audio ballot. At the Voting Center, voters may choose to receive an official ballot in English and Chinese, Filipino, or Spanish, and facsimile ballot in Burmese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, or Vietnamese. Finally, translation in hundreds of languages, including American Sign Language, and curbside service are available at the Voting Center.
 - iii. To encourage voters to share their excitement about casting a ballot with friends and family, the Voting Center hosts several photo stations featuring San Francisco's new "I Voted!" sticker. Throughout the early voting period, voters will be invited to use one of these stations to take a selfie for posting and to remind others to vote. Visitors too young to vote will have the opportunity to pose with an "I Am a Future Voter" sign.
 - iv. The Department opened 37 accessible and outdoor ballot drop boxes in neighborhoods across the City. Each official drop box will remain open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until 8 p.m. on Election Day.
- C. To date, the Department has received and begun processing approximately 11,000 returned VBM ballot packets.

- i. VBM ballot processing begins with an image capture of the signature on each vote-by-mail envelope for comparison to the signature image(s) in the voter's registration record. If the signature compares, the envelope is accepted, and the ballot inside is removed for scanning and Election Night tabulation.
 - ii. All local ballot processing occurs in public areas open to observers. When processing vote-by-mail ballots, Department personnel follow strict operational rules. These rules protect the overall integrity of the election (e.g., one person, one vote) as well as individual rights (e.g., the right to cast a secret ballot).
 - iii. Ballot processing statistics, including up-to-date numbers of ballots sent, returned, accepted, challenged, and in review are available, along with other data sets, via the EData tool at sfelections.org/edata.
 - D. In anticipation of an increase in public inquiries, the Department expanded its phone bank to a 15-member team.
 - i. This multilingual team will answer telephone calls and email correspondence through Election Day. Phone bank lines will be open during regular business hours and the last two weekends before Election Day.
 - ii. Most of the inquiries received to date have been concerning voter registration (e.g., registration, address, or party preference status, registration and update form requests), crossover ballot requests, or general questions about primary election rules.
 - E. To date, the Department has recruited approximately 3,000 poll workers. Although the Department has met its goal to staff each polling place with three poll workers, the Department will continue to accept new applicants in response to expected poll worker cancellations and to increase the number of poll workers who can provide bilingual assistance at polling places on Election Day.
 - F. Last week, the Department launched its online and in-person poll worker training program, with voting equipment practice labs to begin on February 24. Consistent with the Department's racial equity goals, off-site training classes will be available in Excelsior, Portola, Richmond, Sunset, and Visitacion Valley neighborhoods.
 - G. The Department has been preparing 501 sets of supplies, signage, and voting equipment for delivery to each polling place and is in the process of arranging delivery days/times with polling place hosts.
- II. The Department continues to provide voter outreach and education to communities across the City.**
 - A. The Department has been delivering Voter Information Pamphlets (VIPs) to locally registered voters.
 - i. All voters will receive the VIP in English via their selected method of delivery (email or postal mail.) Those who have requested election materials in Chinese, Filipino, or Spanish also receive a copy in that language.
 - ii. Any voter may also access the VIP in PDF, HTML, or audio MP3 on voterguide.sfelections.org or request the VIP in large print, audio on USB flash drive, National Library Service cartridge, or compact disc.
 - iii. In addition to information about local candidates and measures and a sample ballot, the VIP includes information about voting options, accessible and multilingual resources, and poll worker service. The VIP also includes several pages highlighting the special voting programs available to residents who are unable to travel to the polls and who are involved with the justice system.

- B. On January 31, the Department held its *Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee* meeting, which focused on reviewing services available to local voters with disabilities.
- C. The Department continues to deliver its outreach programs to vulnerable residents throughout the City, including:
 - i. Outreach to voters in hospitals and other medical facilities -
 - a. The Department has re-engaged with medical students, staff, and volunteers at hospitals and medical facilities throughout San Francisco with the goal of reaching voters who are hospitalized in the upcoming election cycle. The Department is communicating information about voting options intended to help hospitalized voters 1) receive a ballot, 2) mark their ballot, and 3) return their ballot.
 - b. Voters unable to travel to the polls have several options to get their ballot: 1) use the AVBM system, 2) authorize someone to pick up their ballot at City Hall on their behalf, or 3) request emergency ballot delivery service from Department staff. (Once such a request for ballot delivery is received, Department staff will bring a ballot to the patient in the hospital or medical facility and then, after the ballot is marked, will facilitate the ballot's pickup and return to the Department. Ballot delivery staff will be equipped with the same assistive devices available at all polling places.)
 - c. To ensure those who serve patients are aware of these options, the Department has contacted its partners at local hospitals and skilled nursing facilities to provide: 1) a letter explaining the voting options listed above, 2) an informational poster about emergency ballot service, and 3) ballot delivery request forms. Department staff are making follow-up phone calls to these facilities to ensure the materials were received and to offer additional resources, if requested.
 - d. The Department is preparing for Election Day voting in Emergency Departments at UCSF Parnassus Hospital and Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital. The Department will host a training for medical staff and volunteers about how to properly gather ballot requests from patients, how to provide proper assistance to patients marking their ballots, and where to return ballots onsite at the hospitals. On Election Day, the Department will prepare ballots on a rolling basis throughout the day, and will deliver them to a coordinator at several set times for the patients who have requested them.
 - ii. Outreach to residents experiencing homelessness or housing insecure -
 - a. The Department has mailed nearly 200 reminders to property managers, building superintendents, and front desk clerks at Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings and homeless shelters throughout the City to prepare their mailrooms for an increased volume of election mail. Each reminder included a packet of documents depicting images of the official U.S. Election Mail logo, the vote-by-mail packet outer envelope, and Voter Information Pamphlet cover, all included to show those who may handle mail what to look for when delivering residents election materials. Each reminder packet also included two posters with 1) general election information, and 2) emergency ballot delivery options.

- b. The Department has contacted its partners who are connected to organizations serving people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. Outreach packets to these contacts included: 1) a letter offering specialized outreach and voter registration services, 2) a flyer with information about how to register and vote without a fixed address, 3) a poster about ballot delivery options for homebound and hospitalized voters, and 4) ballot delivery request forms.
 - c. Prior to Election Day, Department personnel will provide local homeless shelters with multilingual posters that will invite residents to contact the Department for assistance with registration and voting.
- iii. Outreach to residents who have been historically less engaged with elections -
- a. The Department has been organizing pop-up voter registration events and neighborhood walks across the City. Approximately 50 such events will be held in a variety of venues, including open air plazas, public parks, and outside of businesses in walkable areas, all in neighborhoods in which residents have been historically less engaged with elections, as based on registration and turnout statistics. At these events Department staff will offer registration and pre-registration forms, poll worker applications, and official election flyers. A complete list of upcoming outreach events is available at sfelections.org/events.
 - b. The Department's motivating "register to vote" messages continue to broadcast on local radio stations popular with young, Black, Spanish- and Chinese- speaking populations, including KMEL, Que Buena 98.9/99.1 FM, KEST, and KIQI.
 - c. In addition to on-air and streaming radio advertisements, the Department's "I Vote For My _____" (family, community, future) messaging appears on more than 15 bus shelters across the City, on the exterior of approximately 200 Muni busses, and on a large billboard in Bayview Hunters Point.
 - d. The Department launched several user-generated content (UGC) style videos that primarily target San Franciscans with messaging intended to make voting personal by localizing the data-driven reasons many eligible but unregistered voters choose not to register or participate in elections. This content will appear across the Department's social media accounts, and can be viewed here:
 - i. Facebook:
 - 1. <https://www.facebook.com/reel/914302779943884>
 - 2. <https://www.facebook.com/sfelections/videos/1099964108117419>
 - ii. Instagram:
 - 1. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2vXIFFIJ4L/>
 - 2. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C20xSamoBuT/>
 - 3. https://www.instagram.com/p/C2gB9oevE7z/?img_index=1
 - iii. X:
 - 1. <https://twitter.com/SFElections/status/1752451078363476187>
 - 2. <https://twitter.com/SFElections/status/1753215829192438180>
 - e. Since the launch of its mixed media approach campaign, the Department has achieved over 590,000 impressions, reaching more than 114,000 targeted social media accounts, and resulting in more than 16,000 visits to the Department's "Register to Vote" web page.

iv. Outreach to future voters -

- a. The Department recently submitted informational copy about local voter registration, pre-registration, voting and poll worker service to SFUSD for inclusion in their February 15th Family Announcement Bulletin (FAB). The FAB is emailed to approximately 68,000 parents and caregivers of local high school, preschool, and elementary students. Going forward, the Department intends to continue to disseminate both general and specific election information through this channel and expresses its appreciation for Commissioner's Parker support in helping establish this connection with SFUSD.

D. The Department has been facilitating its Incarcerated Voting Program.

- i. The Department delivered ballot packets to personnel of the Sheriff's Prisoner Legal Services for distribution to registered voters incarcerated in local jails as well as to personnel of the Juvenile Probation Department for distribution to young adult voters incarcerated at the San Francisco Juvenile Detention Center.
- ii. To assist eligible but not yet registered individuals experiencing incarceration, the Department will continue to partner with PLS and the Juvenile Probation Department by conducting voter registration drives, as well as providing eligible individuals in custody with registration forms, outreach materials, and presentations on how to register and vote while involved with the justice system.

- E. To maintain operational transparency and keep all interested members of the public and the media informed about March 5 election activity, the Department has been issuing regular press releases, as posted on [sfelections.org](https://www.sfelections.org).

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

- A. The Department has nearly completed hiring and onboarding temporary employees for the March 5 election cycle.
- B. On January 26, the Department submitted its FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 draft budget proposals to the Budget and Oversight of Public Elections Committee (BOPEC), with all budget forms (Attachment 1) required by the Mayor's Office of Public Policy and Finance and the Controller's Office and a memorandum (Attachment 2) which outlines the citywide budget process, priorities and fiscal outlook, and provides an overview of the Department's budget proposals. These proposals were reviewed at the BOPEC meeting on January 29.
- C. On January 30, 2024, the Department received File No. 240029. This notice, entitled "Hearing on Artificial Intelligence in Local Elections; and requesting the Department of Elections and Ethics Commission to report," had been both introduced and assigned to the Board of Supervisors' Rules Committee on January 9, 2024.

Some of the actions the Department is taking to address possible Artificial Intelligence (AI) - generated misinformation, disinformation and fake news related to San Francisco elections include: 1) adding a section to outreach presentations about election security; 2) developing a flyer about safeguards related to election processes, voter data, voting equipment, and ballot processing; 3) creating a webpage with "common misconceptions" and information on how to report false or misleading election information; 4) establishing protocols for monitoring the Department's social media accounts; 5) incorporating "Mythbuster Mondays" into the Department's regular social media postings; 6) acquiring a social media management tool, which has a listening feature that will alert Department personnel whenever the Department (or other SF election-related key words, i.e.

results, election security, drop boxes) is mentioned on social media posts, and 7) establishing contacts with state and local agencies for reporting election misinformation.

IV. The Department is planning to submit draft amendments to Municipal Elections Code (MEC) Section 401 regarding candidates' Chinese-character based names that appear on ballots (see Attachment 3).

- A. The amendments reflect the Board of Supervisors' action in resolution number 526-23 (Attachment 4) that states the Board "urges the San Francisco Department of Elections report back to the Board of Supervisors on (the Department's) implementation of AB 57 for the 2024 elections by the end of November 2023.
- B. AB 57 has now been codified in the California Elections Code (CAEC) as Section 13211.7 (Attachment 5) and requires candidates' names to appear on ballots in character-based names where applicable and for candidates to demonstrate the usage of a Chinese-character based name for two years prior to filing nomination documents.
- C. San Francisco Municipal Elections Code Section 401 (Attachment 6) also requires candidates' names to appear on ballots in Chinese-character based names and does not specify a timeframe during which candidates must demonstrate the usage of a name or transliteration.
- D. The draft amendments to MEC Section 401 fully incorporate subsection (b) of CAEC Section 13211.7 which stipulates candidates demonstrate they have been known by a particular name for at least two years.
- E. The draft amendments to MEC Section 401 also provide for candidates to submit declarations signed under the penalty of perjury that they were given Chinese-character based names at birth although they have no substantiating documentation (see Attachment 7).
 - 1. One declaration provides for a family member to attest a candidate was given a specified name at birth and that the candidate cannot provide additional documentation.
 - 2. A second declaration provides for candidates to self-attest they cannot obtain a signature from a family member and that the candidates cannot provide supporting documentation.

V. 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 January 1 – January 31, the Department processed affidavits for 3,754 new registrants, residing in the following Supervisorial Districts: (SD) 1 – 269, SD 2 – 473, SD 3 – 469, SD 4 – 199, SD 5 – 421, SD 6 – 433, SD 7 – 263, SD 8 – 410, SD 9 – 324, SD 10 – 273, SD 11 – 220.
- B. Between January 1 – January 31, the Department conducted 49 outreach events; which had approximately 3,955 people in attendance collectively. The number of such events by Supervisorial District was: SD 3 – 10, SD 5 – 8, SD 6 – 15, SD 7 – 4, SD 9 – 6, SD 10 – 4, SD 11 – 2.