

Memo Re the March 5, 2024 Primary Election Results Reporting
Robin Stone
President, Elections Commission
March 20, 2024 Regular Meeting

Background

In 2021, California passed a law permanently requiring vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots to be sent to every registered voter. In every election since then, [~90% of San Francisco voters](#) have chosen to cast their ballots by mail (VBM) over a physical polling location. With longer lead times and processing requirements, the uptick in VBM has considerable implications for election results reporting. The issue is not unique to San Francisco; as of Tuesday, March 19, 2024, [166K ballots remain uncounted and a dozen races remain too close to call across the entire state of California](#) – a full two weeks after election day.

March 5, 2024 Primary Election

During and ahead of elections, the San Francisco Department of Elections provides [a robust and transparent reporting schedule on their website](#), in addition to publishing daily press releases with preliminary results and estimated outstanding ballots to be counted. Importantly, the first batch of results reported on election night only encompass in-person voting and VBM ballots received *prior* to election day. On the March 5 Primary Election night, the Department still had to count more than 50% of total ballots cast, however several local news outlets began calling races, making determinations about election outcomes, and inaccurately covering the results reporting schedule.

Here is a brief snapshot of inaccuracies reported by local news outlets within the first 48-hours of election day:

6:35 sfstandard.com

The San Francisco Standard

still rolling in, and a few contests remain too close to call.

By the end of Tuesday night, the Elections Department released its count of nearly 105,000 ballots. After initially scheduling its next results drop for Wednesday afternoon, the department announced Wednesday morning that election watchers will have to wait until 4 p.m. Thursday for the next batch.

NEWS + POLITICS

Declaring the end of progressive San Francisco is a bit premature

Tim Redmond - March 6, 2024

Only 20 percent of the votes have been counted. And we have heard this story before.

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UPDATE: The last results are in for tonight, we'll get more tomorrow.

Most contests held: Progressives picked up two DCCC seats, but were still tanked 21-3.

Prop. A had 67.74%. B will lose, C will likely win, & D, E, F & G will win.

The judges will likely keep their seats.

Democratic County Central Committee

DCCC Assembly District 17

Slates	Seats	Votes
Conservative Change	14	54,916 (29.31%)
Let's Go Progressives	3	14,276 (7.64%)
Let's Go	7	26,748 (14.35%)

Candidates

Candidate	Votes
Matt Cooney	6,415 (34.66%)
Nancy Tang	4,415 (23.95%)
Let's Go	4,075 (21.92%)
Thomas Chaudhry	4,075 (21.92%)
Erica Wickham	4,075 (21.92%)
Shirley Gordon	4,075 (21.92%)
Michael Lai	4,075 (21.92%)
Jan Berglund	3,975 (21.42%)
Carla Barnes	2,975 (16.14%)
John Adams	2,975 (16.14%)
Let's Go	2,975 (16.14%)
John Kim	2,975 (16.14%)
Chad Baker	2,975 (16.14%)
Lorraine Lutz	2,975 (16.14%)

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EARLY RESULTS ARE IN

A tough night for progressives: Props. E & F are coasting to victory, & the progressive DCCC slate has just one seat out of 24...

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Ballot drops throughout Wednesday only marginally changed the initial outcomes. The next tranche of votes will be released at 4 p.m. on Thursday. Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.

San Francisco Chronicle e-Edition

PROGRESSIVISM IS OUT — FOR NOW

Voters make it clear: S.F. can no longer be called a progressive city

Looking Ahead

With [growing concerns about disruptions](#) to November's Presidential Election, and the certainty of San Francisco's November ballot significantly outsize the March primary (see Memo Regarding AB1416), it is imperative that the media is prepared to properly educate the public with accurate election information.

Ahead of the Commission's regular meeting, I briefed Director Arntz on my concerns regarding the news reports and asked him to share some context about the Department's communications planning process ahead of elections. I'd like this memo and conversation to jumpstart longer-range planning ahead of November.