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Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC)

Wednesday, April 3, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome, Call to Order, Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum

LAAC members present:

- Janet Bernabe
- Paul Burke
- Juan Pablo Cervantes
- Jacqueline Coto
- Giselle Gasca
- Pedro Hernandez
- Barbara Hurtado
- Val Jacobo
- Dean Logan
- Deanna Kitamura
- Alexander Neofitidis
- Karduz Nguyen
- Svetlana Osokina
- Armando Salud
- Voleck Taking
- Calvin Van
- Monica Villicana

Members of SOS:

- Shirley N. Weber – Secretary of State
- Kirsten Larsen – Election Administration Section Manager

Quorum was met.

2. New Committee Members Swearing-In

- Secretary of State Dr. Shirley N. Weber was present to swear the new committee members in. She spoke about the importance of the LAAC and the work they do to improve California elections.
- The members of the LAAC were sworn-in by the Secretary.

3. Co-Chair Nominations

- The members were asked to nominate a chair for the current LAAC term.
- Deanna Kitamura nominated Pedro Hernandez for chair. The nomination was seconded by Dean Logan.
- Paul Burke nominated Val Jacobo for chair. The nomination was seconded by Alexander Neofitidis.

- Pedro asked if the LAAC might consent to having Val and Pedro act as co-chairs for this term. It was decided that the issue should be attached to the vote to elect Pedro and Val as co-chairs.
- Prior to the vote, it was asked if the candidates could provide an overview of their qualifications. In addition to Pedro and Val's statements, new members of the LAAC introduced themselves in brief statements. Here is an overview of those statements:
 - Pedro Hernandez: Legal Policy Director at California Common Cause, former co-chair of the state LAAC (2023), three years as a member of the CA Language Access Work Group. Focused on gathering data on the experiences of alternative language voters to improve access, privacy, and voter education for Californians.
 - Val Jacobo: Activist for Indigenous rights and for the Oceania community in California, Principal in health equity at Blue Shield of CA, member of 2023 LAAC. Dedicated to improving the voting rights, access, and experiences for Indigenous people and alternative language communities, as well as encouraging trans-creation, or the inclusion of cultural elements in the translation of materials.
 - Juan Pablo Cervantes: Registrar of Voters for Humboldt County.
 - Dean Logan: Registrar of Voters for Los Angeles County.
 - Armando Salud: Yolo County Deputy of Elections, previously with SOS and Sacramento County Elections, 5th term as a LAAC member.
 - Janet Bernabe: Riverside County LAAC member, Executive Director for Centro de Immigrates which is a non-profit supporting immigrant communities in the Inland Empire.
 - Paul Burke: Ventura County NAACP Political Action Chair, also maintains a website called lang1234.org which provides courses in language learning.
 - Jacqueline Coto: State Director of NALEO (National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials), focuses on civil engagement and policy.
 - Deanna Kitamura: Voter rights attorney with the Asian Law Caucus, member of the CA Language Access Work Group, long-time member of the state LAAC.
 - Karduz Nguyen: Former community liaison to the Vietnamese community with the Orange County Registrar of Voters, professional translator, law student, and founder of Vietnamese Language Access, a non-profit.
 - Barbara Hurtado: Representative from the San Luis Obispo Registrar of Voters, with experience in the Spanish translation of ballots.
 - Giselle Gasca: Director for multiple states for Poder Latinx, an immigrant rights organization.

- Alexander Neofitidis: Professional American Sign Language translator in San Diego County.
- Svetlana Osokina: Estate planning business attorney in Sacramento County.
- Voleck Taing: Government affairs advocate for the American Council of Engineering Companies, in addition to lobbying, tasked with expanding diversity. Has past election translation experience in the Khmer language and Cambodian community and volunteered with SOS to advise on the Voter Safe Act.
- Calvin Van: CEO of a non-profit that works in Orange County on alternative language issues.
- Monica Villicana: Spanish translator and interpreter for the language access unit in Santa Clara County, part of the Division of Equity and Social Justice, former ballot translator for the county Registrar of Voters.

Motion: To elect Pedro Hernandez and Val Jacobo as co-chairs for the current LAAC term.

- The vote was 17-0 in favor.

4. **Committee Goals**

- Coordinating outreach efforts between state and county LAACs.
- Paying reviewers for their time working on the Voter Information Guide (VIG) and other translated materials.
- Reviewing the outcomes of the No Party Preference/Presidential Primary mailers issued by the counties prior to the March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election.
- Studying the relationship between the geography of counties and the language services provided by the county Registrar of Voters (ROV).
- Reviewing goals left in progress by the 2023 LAAC.
- Obtaining more resources for county outreach programs and for the translation of election materials.
- Explore the use of best practice guides to ensure consistency in voting materials and outreach efforts throughout the state.
- Explore and evaluate various translation tools (i.e. video or audio relay) to find the best technological solutions to issues facing alternative language voters.
- Reviewing the bilingual poll workers survey from the previous LAAC and prepare to reissue the survey to poll workers who served in the recent March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election.
- Researching methods of providing a central language resource for deaf and hard of hearing voters. Note: It was mentioned that this

issue might be more suited for the Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC), but it may be discussed further by the LAAC.

- Exploring best practices that can be recommended to SOS regarding issues that may be present during the November 5, 2024, General Election.

5. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

- Pedro asked the LAAC members to consider which subcommittees they would like to participate in.
 - Paul asked if it is possible, or legal, for the co-chairs of the LAAC to appoint subcommittee chairs. The LAAC will need to look into this issue for an answer.
- Voleck Taing asked if the LAAC meetings will all be held virtually, and it was confirmed that they will be.
- Val asked if the LAAC members could be supplied with a LAAC directory. Pedro agreed that a directory should be produced along with guidance on how to best utilize the directory.
- Svetlana Osokina asked for an overview of what the LAAC does and how they make their recommendations to SOS.
 - Pedro explained, using examples of subcommittee work from the previous LAAC, how the LAAC researches and prepares recommendations and documents for consideration by SOS and the Elections team.
- There was also a question about scheduling and the regularity of meetings, which are currently bi-monthly. Pedro mentioned that the number of meetings held over the course of the year can change. Jana Lean cautioned that a high number of meetings could potentially interfere with SOS work, especially with the General Election approaching.

6. Adjournment