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COUNTY CLERK, RECORDER AND ASSESSOR ELECTIONS DIVISION

To: The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
From: Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk, Recorder and Assessor
Date: April 29, 2026
Subject: Report on Elections Information Requested by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

This letter addresses the requested information from the Board of Supervisors to the Elections Division at the Board of Supervisors April 21, 2026, meeting. The Board requested the following report:

1) *The Elections Division, in coordination with the District Attorney, Sheriff's Office and County Counsel, report on protocols and training for the June and November 2026 election cycle to prevent voter intimidation and to address any attempted use of polling locations or County property for immigration enforcement or other activities that could interfere with voter access by May 5, 2026; Addressed in "1. Securing the Vote" below.*

2) *Receive report on County Employee Election Officer Program that encourages County employees to be trained poll monitors on election day and be paid their regular wages (similar to employees working in the Emergency Operations Center during times of emergencies); including efforts as to how awareness of that program can be increased and the program might be expanded upon, by May 5, 2026; Addressed in "2. County Employee Election Officer Program" below.*

3) *Request the Elections Division in coordination with the Public Information Officer to issue clear, user-friendly, public guidance as to how ballots will be protected from any interference, including federal, state, county, and local entities, by May 5, 2026. Addressed in "3. Outreach Efforts" below.*

4) *Request that County departments assist with the distribution of a "Know Your Rights" voting flyer. This flyer will be distributed to all members of the public, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, etc. prior to the June and November 2026 elections. Addressed in "4. Know your Rights Flyer" below.*

The following is the Election's Division's Response to the request.

1. SECURING THE VOTE

The Office of the Registrar of Voters is responsible for conducting Federal, State and Local elections in accordance with the California Elections Code. The *Registrar of Voters is not a law enforcement agency*. We follow procedures for contacting law enforcement when any violation of election law occurs; we cannot intercede in any law enforcement activity.

The Registrar's office along with the California Secretary of State's office combats voter intimidation by educating poll workers on how to identify voter intimidation and report those actions to the Elections Division and the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Use of polling locations by law enforcement agencies that interfere with voter access and the voting process unrelated to a law enforcement activity, will be reported immediately to our law enforcement partners and the California Secretary of State.

For the June 2nd Statewide Primary Election, the Santa Barbara County Elections Division will have 61 polling places staffed by approximately 385 volunteer Election Officers. In recent elections there has been an average turnout at the polls of approximately 7 percent. Over 90 percent of voters choose to vote early and utilize the Vote by Mail ballot that every registered voter receives several weeks before election day.

Each Election Officer is required to participate in a training program that encompasses ballot issuance, voter registration, de-escalation techniques as well as how to identify, resolve and report any unusual or concerning issues. In addition, Election Officers are trained in how to identify Voter Intimidation. Voter intimidation is illegal and is a serious offense. It is a felony if any person "makes use of or threatens to make use of any force, violence, or tactic of coercion or intimidation" to induce or compel any other person to vote or refrain from voting, refrain from voting for any particular person or measure at any election; or because any person voted or refrained from voting at any election or voted or refrained from voting for any particular person or measure. It is also a felony if anyone hires or arranges for any other person to do any of the above. (Elec. Code, § 18540.) If such an issue were to occur, Elections Officers are instructed to notify the Elections Division, Sheriff's Department and local law enforcement. Contact phone numbers and Election Officer hotline telephone numbers are provided at all polling places.

This year, as we do every year, the Elections Division has partnered with the Santa Barbara County Sheriff to ensure security and safety of all aspects of the election process, including Sheriff's personnel stationed on site at the Elections Command Center. Voted ballots are transported securely from the polls to the Elections Division, on election night ballots are accompanied by Sheriff's personnel from ballot reception centers to the main Elections Division office. The Sheriff's Office provides dozens of officers to assist in protecting ballots as well as ensuring the safety of polling places located throughout the County. The Elections Division meets regularly with State and Federal Law Enforcement agencies to ensure physical security of our polls as well as cybersecurity of our Elections Infrastructure. Once ballots are received from the voter whether at polling place, by mail or drop box they are required to be in "dual custody" to ensure the secure transportation and processing of every ballot.

SAFETY OF BALLOT DROP BOXES

Ballot Drop Boxes have become a voter favorite, surpassing U.S. Postal Service returns in the 2025 Special Election. The County of Santa Barbara has 18 official ballot drop boxes located throughout the county. Constructed from high-grade materials and are designed to withstand tampering and vandalism.

Elections staff adhere to strict chain-of-custody protocols including sealing ballots in tamper proof containers, logging and verifying seal numbers as well as remaining in dual custody.

VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS

Vote by Mail has earned the trust of a majority of Santa Barbara County voters. Each Vote by Mail envelope is assigned a unique barcode, allowing voters to track its journey from issuance to when it's received and counted through California's Ballotrax system.

Upon receipt, each mail-in ballot undergoes rigorous ballot preparation at our main Elections Division Office. Well trained elections staff process all mail-in ballots thoroughly, using advanced sorting and scanning technology.

Every returned ballot undergoes signature verification by comparing it with those on file to confirm authenticity. This prevents fraudulent votes and ensures only valid ballots are counted, upholding the integrity of our electoral system.

2. COUNTY EMPLOYEE ELECTION OFFICER PROGRAM

Established in 2020, the County Employee Election Officer Program provides an opportunity for County employees to serve the public in a meaningful civic capacity. Participating employees are compensated at their regular wage and receive an additional stipend for their service on election day. County employees may participate as Election Officers, Election night stipend workers (in-office), or as Field Supervisors.

The program has become an important component of our staffing strategy and an excellent avenue for County employees to engage directly with the democratic process. Since 2020 our office has consistently used County employees in several areas to support election day procedures. Please view the table below:

Election	Total # County Employees	Election Officers	Election Night Stipend Workers (in-office) or Field Supervisors
2024 Primary	49	22	27
2024 General	95	45	50
2025 Special	74	13	61
2026 Primary*	28	17	11

*Enrolled as of April 29, 2026

3. OUTREACH EFFORTS

The Santa Barbara Elections Division partners with the Public Information Officer to remind voters of important milestones in the election cycle, such as when to expect County Voter Information Guides, when to expect to receive ballots, where to find polling places or ballot drop boxes. Voters are reminded to thoroughly read the important information contained in the Voter Information Guide.

Voter Bill of Rights is included in each State Voter Information Guide and is posted at all polling sites. The Voter Bill of Rights along with additional voter information is also available 24/7 on our website at www.santabarbaravote.gov

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

Our outreach strategy is multi-layered, designed to recruit qualified election officers from a broad cross-section of the community while simultaneously encouraging civic participation. Current outreach channels include:

- Higher Education – University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) and Isla Vista:
 - Coordinating with Viviana Marsano, Assistant Dean for Civic & Community Engagement
 - Recruiting students to serve as Election Officers
 - UCSB won the outreach and registration drive statewide award presented by Secretary of State Weber in her visit to them and our office in 2025
- High Schools across Santa Barbara County
 - Communicating and coordinating with high school history, government, and economics teachers as well as principals or college and career centers.
 - Recruiting students to serve as Election Officers or to volunteer as a part of their community service requirements.
 - Our outreach and engagement have directly inspired students such as Garrett Williams, who authored the book “One Day, I will Vote” and spearheaded student civic engagement efforts at Santa Barbara High School in 2024, serving as a powerful example of the lasting impact this program can have.
 - High School student participants may elect to receive a monetary stipend for their service or, alternatively, claim their hours towards satisfying community service requirements – providing a flexible and meaningful incentive for student involvement.
- Adopt-A-Polls – partner organizations that staff their own election officers
 - Program began in 2000 with approximately 4-5 organizations participating.

- Current participating organizations:
 - Knights Of Colombus
 - P.E.O (Philanthropic Educational Organization) Women’s Group
 - Santa Barbara Host Lions Club – Community Service Organization
 - David Boyd – Church Community (St. Michael’s University Church & All Saints by the Sea)

4. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS FLYER

The California Secretary of State has issued a public notice regarding voter rights (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/administration/news-releases-and-advisories/2025-news-releases-and-advisories/know-your-rights-californias-voter-bill-rights-protects-every-voter>) and has an established and defined California Voter Bill of Rights (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-bill-rights>) that has information, in several languages for broad community access, regarding voter rights. Additionally, information and resources to report potential violations of those rights with the California Secretary of State’s office are also included. This information is already available and included in the voter information guide sent to all registered voters.

CONCLUSION

As we enter the 2026 election cycle, rest assured that every possible step is being taken to protect the integrity of the voting process. With stringent measures to protect ballot boxes, rigorous verification processes for mail-in ballots and proactive strategies at polling places. Voters can trust that their ballots are safe and their voices will be heard.

Additional information is available at the Elections Division website at www.santabarbaravote.gov