



Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

DEAN C. LOGAN

Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

January 29, 2021

TO: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
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CC: Fesia A. Davenport, Chief Executive Officer

FROM: Dean C. Logan, *Dean* Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

STRUCTURAL CHANGES FOR THE NOVEMBER 2020 ELECTION (ITEM 6, AGENDA OF AUGUST 4, 2020)

Disaster Service Worker Election Worker Program

This report is in response to a motion adopted by your Board on August 4, 2020 to conduct an analysis of the County Disaster Service Worker (DSW) Election Worker Program for the Presidential General Election and provide recommendations on ways to enhance the program for future elections.

Need for DSW Program

COVID-19 created unique challenges for the implementation of the 2020 Presidential General Election. It required the implementation of new tools, procedures and protocols to ensure the safety of our election workers, voters and the community. The Department had to acquire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to run approximately 800 sites serving 5.7 million voters. The pandemic required the Department to secure larger spaces for Vote Centers to allow for social distancing. Additionally, it required a new election worker recruitment approach for securing members of the public to serve.

To address the potential staffing challenges, your board responded by temporarily suspending the County Employee Election Worker Program and directing the Department to work with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Department of Human Resources (DHR), and County Counsel to immediately implement a new DSW Election Worker Program.

DSW Program Overview

Immediately following the approval of your motion, the Department began collaborating with the other identified departments and established a cadence to discuss program goals, structure, thresholds, processes and funding. The goal of the DSW Election Worker Program was to ensure adequate staffing levels, proper staff distribution, and appropriate training. To meet this goal, it was determined that 7,400 County employees were needed for this assignment. Approximately 1,600 were needed to serve as Leads and Assistant Leads, approximately 4,800 as Vote Center Clerks, and approximately 1,000 as Reservists to address cancellations and absences.

On September 1, 2020, DHR notified all departments of the targeted number of employees that they were asked to provide to staff the election. All departments were allocated DSW deployment numbers based on a percentage of their total employee population (14.5% of filled positions) and asked to designate roles for each assigned DSW based on the responsibilities of the various Vote Center roles and consistent with the employee's job classification. To assist with this, a detailed description of each Vote Center role and a list of applicable classifications aligned with each role was provided. RR/CC established the resource needs for each Vote Center. Eight DSWs were allocated for each vote center (6 Clerks, 1 Assistant Lead and 1 Lead). Consistent with the defined staffing model, each department was asked to provide 75% of their DSW allocation as Clerks, 12.5% as Assistant Leads and 12.5% as Leads. To allow all assigned DSWs time to complete election worker training the deadline to provide the names of DSWs was September 18, 2020.

To ensure the effective placement of DSWs in Vote Centers, departments provided the list of DSWs on a template spreadsheet to DHR. Each department screened DSWs for their ability to perform their DSW assignment with the understanding that employees with underlying health conditions that would place them in an at-risk category should not be assigned. DHR worked with departments on a case-by-case basis to assist with questions related to at-risk or vulnerable populations. If an assigned DSW was unable to work or refused to perform the work assigned, departments were required to provide a replacement.

Program Outcome

The collaborative efforts of the Department and DHR to solicit DSWs for the Presidential General Election through the DSW Election Worker Program were highly successful with 100% County department participation. Departments embraced the challenge and collectively met the goal of recruiting 7,400 County employees to participate in the DSW Election Worker Program.

DSWs provided excellent customer service, were extremely reliable, and adhered to policies and procedures ensuring voter accessibility and protecting the integrity of the election. The attendance rates for DSWs were much higher (99%) than the attendance rate (84%) of volunteer election workers in the 2020 Primary Election.

The success can be attributed to many factors including:

1. DSWs were committed to the success of the Election.
2. DSWs were held accountable for punctuality and attendance.
3. DSWs know the County and its communities well.
4. DSWs understand County policies, codes of conduct, attendance, and behavioral expectations.

While the program was highly successful, this initial implementation revealed some challenges as well. Some of those challenges include:

1. Pandemic-related challenges such as lack of child-care for employees with children whose schools or daycares were shut down and the requirement for employees to self-isolate due to COVID-19 exposure or symptoms.
2. Some departments not properly vetting staff resulting in some staff being unable to fulfill their election worker assignments.
3. Recruitment efforts began approximately two months later than election worker recruitment usually begins due to the need to define and implement this new DSW program.

Disaster Service Worker Feedback

In order to gather direct sentiment and feedback from DSWs, the Department sent an online survey to all program participants. While the Department heard directly from DSWs through email, the election worker phone bank and direct calls to Department staff, this survey provided the Department with a formal data gathering tool to collect data from election workers who had not had an opportunity to provide their feedback or share sentiments about their experience. The data gathered through this survey will assist the Department to continue to refine the program in collaboration with DHR, OEM and County Counsel.

The Department issued this survey via email to all DSWs on January 5, 2020 and it remained open for two weeks. Approximately 1,900 DSWs responded to the survey. Respondents were asked to provide feedback on their experience with training, the pre-check process, supplies, the Vote Center process and election worker support.

The feedback was very positive. 86% of respondents indicated that they had a positive or very positive experience being a Vote Center Lead, Assistant Lead or Clerk. Only about 10% of respondents indicated that they are unlikely to serve in their election staffing role again, if given the option.

Participants of the DSW Election Worker Program stated:

"It was a wonderful experience as a county employee I was very proud to represent our Department."

"Organized training and implementation. Placement at a site near my home. Good professional experience. Would volunteer again. Positive interactions with RR/CC Staff and DSW/volunteers."

"Elections are a critical component of our society and community. I appreciated the opportunity to assist RR/CC."

"Fulfilling and fun experience. A lot of work, and very challenging, but also very rewarding personally."

The staff support, the instructions given, the training, fellow workers, and the location in which I worked set for a wonderful experience."

"Overall it was a great experience learning the election process and supporting staff. We had a great group of individuals working together which made it a lot easier."

"It was great to feel involved in such an important process. Working with people from different walks of life was eye-opening. Communication between RRCC and Leads/Assistant Leads was excellent."

"Learned more about the overall electoral process. Also allowed myself to use leadership skills I have developed over my entire career."

"I believe in public service and I look for opportunities to lead teams. Leading a team in a vote center completely meets those criteria."

"I enjoy serving our community and as a Military veteran it gives me great pleasure to be of service in our democratic process."

"I found that the tremendous amount of work and responsibility as the Lead resulted in great fulfillment and satisfaction at the end, from having shepherded such a great team of volunteers in conducting a highly successful election operation at our Center."

"Serving for such an important component of the democratic process feels good. I enjoyed meeting new people - everyone was great. It was rewarding to put my supervisory skills to good work leading others."

"The County was well organized, had good amount of volunteers/workers, and a process of high integrity. An honor to be part of the process."

In looking at more focused elements of the program, 96% of respondents felt they were adequately staffed and 61% felt prepared or very prepared after training. Survey respondents had recommendations for improving their experience as Election Worker DSWs such as increasing in-person hands-on training, better vetting and selection of Leads to ensure skillset is aligned with demands of the role, and earlier communication of roles and assignment locations. DSWs provided valuable feedback through this survey which will be utilized to continue to enhance the program.

Recommended Enhancements

In order to build on the success of the DSW Election Worker Program, and address the challenges that were faced during the initial implementation, the following enhancements are recommended:

1. Modify the County Employee Election Worker Program to include mandatory thresholds for departments, similar to the DSW Election Worker Program utilized for the Presidential General Election, in time for the 2022 Gubernatorial Primary Election. This modification to the current program, would require action by your Board. Our Department will work with DHR, CEO, County Counsel and Labor Unions to determine a recommended structure for this program to present to your Board
2. Start recruitment sooner. This will require the program structure to be clearly defined in time to begin recruitment at least 120 days prior to the beginning of the voting period.
3. Improved vetting of staff by departments in order to ensure staff are able to fulfill their assignment. This includes discussing availability, ability to travel or access to transportation and discussing job requirements.
4. Enhance training program. The online and virtual training components of the Election Worker Training Program proved to be highly successful. The Department will continue to enhance and increase those components to make training as easy and accessible as possible for DSWs.
5. Establish more schedule options with fewer days assigned to individuals.

The Department seeks to make voting accessible and secure for all Los Angeles County voters and in order to do so, will continue to rely on the support and collaborative efforts of other County departments. The DSW Election Worker Program is a great example of how County departments can collaborate for the benefit of our voters.

I want to thank our partners at the Department of Human Resources, the Office of Emergency Management, and County Counsel for their efforts and collaboration. The Department and DHR will continue to collaboratively analyze and enhance the program to provide voters with an easy, accessible and secure voting experience.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly at (562) 462-2716, or your staff may contact Monica Flores, Manager of Governmental and Legislative Affairs at (562) 462-2697 or email: mflores@rrcc.lacounty.gov.