

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Tim Dupuis, Registrar of Voters  
Cynthia Cornejo, Deputy Registrar of Voters  
County of Alameda  
1225 Fallon Street, Rm. G-1  
Oakland, California 94612

Dear Mr. Dupuis and Ms. Cornejo,

As City Clerks of Alameda County, we recognize and appreciate the monumental responsibility of the Registrar of Voters (ROV) in ensuring the smooth administration of elections. The scale and complexity of elections in Alameda County are immense, and we commend the dedication of your team in serving the voters.

However, this letter serves as a follow-up to a collective effort by Alameda County City Clerks in 2019 to address systemic challenges in our collaboration. In the 2019 letter, we outlined several critical issues and provided specific recommendations to improve communication, transparency, and operational efficiency between the ROV and City Clerks. Regrettably, many of those issues persist today, and the goals we collectively strove for have not been reached.

This letter represents the collective voice of Alameda County City Clerks and outlines ongoing and new challenges that we believe must be addressed to ensure a stronger partnership in the future.

## Key Issues Requiring Attention

### 1. Communication and Responsiveness

- **Delayed Responses:** City Clerks continue to experience delays in responses to inquiries, particularly on time-sensitive matters such as potential recall petitions.
- **Proactive Notifications:** Decisions impacting cities, such as voting center locations and ballot drop-off events, have not been proactively communicated. For example, City Clerks have reported discovering location decisions only by checking the ROV website rather than being notified directly.
  - **Last-Minute Vote Center Changes:** A Vote Center location was changed just one week before its scheduled opening. While the ROV initially contacted the City Clerk of Albany to explore alternative locations, they failed to confirm the final selection. The City Clerk only discovered the change by checking the ROV website. Additionally, no signage was initially posted at the original location to inform voters of the move, and when signage was eventually placed, it lacked multilingual support—unlike other ROV notifications. These oversights created significant confusion for voters.
  - **Union City Example:** During discussions regarding potential voting centers, the ROV proposed Fire Station 30 as a location. However, communication abruptly stopped despite initial collaboration with the City

Clerk of Union City to assess alternatives due to the unsuitability of Fire Station 30. The City Clerk later discovered that a new location had been selected without their knowledge, causing a breakdown in coordination and planning.

- **Meeting Cancellations and Short Notice:** Workshops, such as the one planned for June 27, 2024, have been canceled with minimal notice. The lack of timely communication regarding rescheduling impacts City Clerks' ability to plan and participate effectively.

## 2. Training and Workshop Scheduling

- **Late Scheduling:** Workshops and training sessions are often scheduled at the last minute, making it difficult for City Clerks to attend.
- **Limited Accessibility:** Some workshops have been scheduled during inconvenient times, such as the July 9, 2024, workshop email sent at 3 PM on the day before a holiday.

## 3. Transparency and Accountability

- **Billing Clarity:** The ROV does not proactively provide detailed, itemized invoices for election-related charges. Clerks must repeatedly request these invoices, creating unnecessary delays and frustration.
- **Unclear Processes:** Ballots were set up before the nomination period ended, raising concerns about accuracy and process transparency.

## 4. Lack of Budgeting Transparency for Elections and Candidate Statements

- **Lack of Estimated Election Costs:** The ROV does not provide sufficiently detailed anticipated costs ahead of election cycles, leaving cities struggling to budget appropriately for election expenses. At the outset of election planning, we request clearer cost estimates to help cities make informed financial decisions. Other ROVs in the Bay Area, such as Santa Clara County, allow City Clerks to request estimated election costs through a structured form, providing transparency and predictability in financial planning.
- **Inconsistent Candidate Statement Cost Estimates:** Candidate statement pricing has been unpredictable, with charges fluctuating significantly without clear explanation. City Clerks request a detailed cost breakdown in advance so that candidates and cities understand the specific charges associated with candidate statements. In Santa Clara County, the ROV provides anticipated costs for candidate statements upfront, offering greater transparency and predictability. We urge the Alameda County ROV to adopt a similar approach to improve clarity and fairness in the election process.

## 5. Ballot and Election Material Management

- **Delivery Issues:** Voter guide delivery delays have caused significant issues in cities like Berkeley, leaving voters without crucial information.
- **Website Accuracy:** Discrepancies on the ROV website, such as mismatched Vote Center Maps and Lists, have caused confusion among voters and Clerks alike.

## 6. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)

- **Processing Delays:** Ranked Choice Voting results are consistently slower than in other counties, creating frustration for candidates, Clerks, and the public.
- **Inconsistent Reporting:** Differences between the Statement of the Vote and RCV reports undermine public confidence in the system and lead to voter distrust.

## The 2019 Letter and Unrealized Goals

In 2019, City Clerks collectively raised many of these issues in a letter to the ROV, advocating for improved communication, transparency, and collaboration. While the ROV has made commendable progress in some areas, such as the OneDrive system for nomination petitions and ballot drop box management, many critical issues remain unaddressed. The lack of follow-through on the commitments in response to the 2019 letter has hindered our ability to achieve the collaborative partnership we envisioned.

## Recommendations for Improvement

1. **Proactive Communication:** Establish clear protocols for notifying City Clerks about decisions, changes, and updates.
2. **Scheduled Quarterly Meetings:** Create a regular schedule of quarterly meetings with City Clerks to discuss election updates, challenges, and plans.
3. **Transparent Billing:** Provide detailed, itemized invoices for election-related charges.
4. **Improved RCV Reporting:** Address discrepancies in RCV results to restore public trust.
5. **Advanced Scheduling:** Announce workshops and training sessions well in advance.
6. **Clear Election Cost Estimates:** Provide cities with a detailed projection of anticipated costs for each election cycle to support proper budgeting.
7. **Candidate Statement Pricing Transparency:** Standardize and itemize cost breakdowns for candidate statements so that costs do not fluctuate unpredictably.
8. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** In light of ongoing challenges and unresolved issues identified in this letter, we strongly recommend a meeting be scheduled within the next month to develop and adopt a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Alameda County Registrar of Voters and the

cities it serves. This MOU would define specific guidelines and expectations for services provided by the ROV, including:

- Timely and transparent communication on election matters.
- Advance scheduling of workshops, trainings, and deadlines.
- Billing transparency with detailed invoices and supporting documentation.
- Regular election results updates, including RCV processes.
- Collaboration with City Clerks, who serve as election officials, in planning and decision-making.

The MOU would also establish a process for periodic review and updates to reflect changes in election laws and best practices, ensuring continued alignment between the ROV and the needs of our cities.

**A Call for Collaborative Action**

We propose a joint meeting between the ROV and Alameda County City Clerks to revisit the issues outlined in the 2019 letter and this letter and establish a clear roadmap for achieving the improvements we all strive for.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with the ROV to ensure fair, transparent, and efficient elections in Alameda County. We hope this renewed effort will resolve longstanding issues and strengthen our partnership moving forward.

Sincerely,

**City Clerks of Alameda County**

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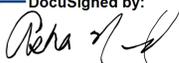
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