



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

John Arntz, Director

Memorandum

To: Elections Commission
From: John Arntz, Director
Date: January 16, 2026
RE: Director's Report: January 21, 2026, Elections Commission Meeting

Following is a brief summary of the work and related information in which the Department of Elections (Department) has been engaged since the previous report issued in relation to the Elections Commission meeting on December 17, 2025, which was cancelled.

I. The Department has been preparing its budget proposals for FY 2026–27 and FY 2027–28.

- A. In December, the Mayor's Office and the Controller's Office issued joint policy and technical instructions, along with budget forms, to guide the preparation of departmental budget proposals for the next two fiscal years.
 - i. According to this guidance, San Francisco's Five-Year Financial Plan projects a two-year General Fund deficit of \$936 million, increasing to \$1.2 billion by FY 2029–30.
 - ii. To address this challenge, the Mayor has directed departments to take a strategic, outcomes-driven approach to budget development. This includes eliminating discretionary programs, operating within current staffing levels while eliminating vacancies and streamlining reporting structures, and reviewing all contracted services and non-personnel expenditures to identify efficiencies and savings.
- B. In preparing its FY 2026–27 and FY 2027–28 budget proposals, the Department has focused on balancing adherence to the Mayor's directives with the need to preserve core election programs, ensuring that services for the two elections within the budget period remain consistent with prior years and that critical election operations, including election material production, language access, accessibility, and voting options, remain fully supported.
- C. The Department is required to submit final drafts of its budget proposals to the Mayor's Office and the Controller's Office by the Charter-mandated deadline of Monday, February 23.
- D. Per San Francisco Administrative Code §3.3, the Department's budget proposals must undergo public review during at least two public meetings. The first of these meetings must occur at least 15 days before the meeting at which the Elections Commission takes action to approve the proposals.
- E. To comply with these requirements, the Department will submit its draft budget proposals to the Elections Commission on Wednesday, January 28. The Commission will then need to schedule a BOPEC meeting no later than Tuesday, February 3, for the initial review of the budget proposals. Final action on the budget may be taken at the Commission's regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, February 18.

F. Should the Elections Commission choose to propose changes to the Commission's budget, the Commission must provide details for each change to the Director by Thursday, February 12. This timeline ensures the Department has sufficient time to incorporate the changes into the budget system and complete the required forms before submission.

II. The Department is working on incorporating new regulatory and legislative changes into its operations.

A. The Department is working to implement a state-mandated expansion of language assistance triggered by updated Secretary of State determinations.

- i. In accordance with California Elections Code § 14201(f), the Secretary of State (SOS) issued new language minority determinations on December 24, 2025. These determinations identify precincts in which 3 percent or more of the voting-age residents belong to a single language minority and lack sufficient English proficiency to vote without assistance. The determinations were based on data provided to the SOS by the California Statewide Database at UC Berkeley, which relied on a special tabulation prepared by the Census Data Review Board to identify precincts that met the 3 percent threshold.
- ii. As a result of these determinations, San Francisco is now required to provide translated facsimile ballots in five additional languages at polling places and by mail or email, make a good-faith effort to recruit poll workers who speak these languages for assignment to identified sites, and notify voters of the opportunity to request facsimile ballots in these languages. The newly required languages are Bengali, Hindi, Hmong, Mongolian, and Urdu, which join the existing state-required languages of Burmese, Japanese, Korean, and Thai.
- iii. In addition, the Department is required to provide translated ballots and materials in Chinese and Spanish under the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA), and in Filipino under the local Language Access Ordinance, and expects to provide materials in Vietnamese as the City adopts Vietnamese as a required language in 2026.
- iv. To implement the new state-mandated language determinations, the Department is updating its website, online voter-facing tools, the Voter Information Pamphlet, polling place signage, and outreach and poll worker recruitment materials. Over the next month, the Department will identify community-based organizations that serve these language communities to support voter outreach and poll worker recruitment, and will conduct targeted mailers to voters born in countries where these languages are spoken to inform them of their options to request facsimile ballots.

B. The Department has reviewed the election-related legislation chaptered in 2025 and is now assessing the operational impacts of new laws. Staff have also begun revising public documents and internal procedures to reflect the changes required for compliance with current law.

- i. Assembly Bill (AB) 1392 had the most immediate impact on the Department's operations, adding California Elections Code section 2166.9, which makes the residence address, telephone number, and email address listed on the affidavit of voter registration for an elected official or candidate confidential. This change required the Department to conduct a mailing to current elected officials to inform them of the new law and provide an opt-in or opt-out option, update the Candidate Nomination Packet to include the newly required forms for candidates, revise the Candidate webpage and Candidate Guide, and establish processes within the voter registration system to ensure that the records of these individuals are excluded from public lists, rosters, and other public disclosures.

- ii. Other notable changes are those enacted by Assembly Bill 827 and Assembly Bill 5.

AB 827 revised the ballot cure process by establishing new deadlines for issuing ballot cure notices and receiving voter responses. For regularly scheduled statewide elections, cure notices must be issued by the 14th day after the election, and voter responses must be received by the 22nd day after the election. For other elections, cure notices must be issued no later than eight days before certification, and cure responses must be received no later than two days before certification. AB 827 also authorizes the use of ballot drop boxes to receive cure notices, expanding voters' options for resolving ballot issues.

Assembly Bill 5 requires elections officials to complete the counting and reporting of ballots on or before the 13th day following an election, subject to the following exceptions: ballots requiring duplication, vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots forwarded by another county, provisional ballots, ballots in the cure process, conditional voter registration (CVR) ballots, and VBM ballots received after the fourth day following the election.

III. The Department continues to carry out its operations and general administrative functions.

- A. The Department has been working toward compliance with the digital accessibility requirements.
 - i. In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a rule under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requiring all state and local governments to bring their public-facing digital content into compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA by April 24, 2026. This requirement applies to all City departments and commissions and covers websites, online applications, forms, PDFs, videos, third-party platforms, and social media content. The rule is intended to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to government services and information delivered through digital platforms.
 - ii. The Department has begun implementing its digital accessibility compliance roadmap in response to these requirements. As of this month, the Department has completed an inventory of its public-facing webpages, web applications, and electronic documents posted on its website to determine which materials require remediation and which may qualify for one of the exceptions for preexisting content. Based on this assessment, the Department has established prioritized remediation schedule for completion, allowing staff to focus first on content that supports essential voter services while ensuring compliance by the deadline.
- B. The Department is currently administering the Retirement Board Election. The Department mailed approximately 80,000 ballots in December and is now receiving and processing voted ballots. The Department will count ballots and report election results on Monday, February 2.
- C. The Department continues its voter roll maintenance efforts to ensure voter records remain accurate and up to date. This work includes processing registration updates and cancellations, issuing voter notices and address confirmation postcards, and integrating data received from state and local agencies. These updates include information from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), the National Change of Address (NCOA) system, reports of deceased individuals from the Department of Public Health, and weekly notifications from the Secretary of State regarding prison commitments and conservatorships.

D. The Department has been holding debrief meetings with service providers to review 2025 election performance, evaluate service delivery, and identify opportunities for cost savings and operational efficiencies. These discussions also inform planning for the 2026 election cycle.

IV. The Department continues its voter outreach, promoting voter registration and election services.

A. The Department's Outreach Team continued to engage vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities, including individuals with disabilities, language-diverse populations, justice-involved residents, people experiencing housing insecurity, and youth.

- i. In December, staff partnered with several nonprofit organizations, including the Latino Task Force, Project Homeless Connect, Glide Foundation, and the Chinese Newcomers Service Center, to provide voter registration assistance and share information about the 2026 elections. Staff also hosted resource tables and delivered educational presentations at community centers and citywide events, including the Canon Kip Senior Center, the Ferry Plaza Black Holiday Market, and the Ruth Williams Opera House Holiday Party.

V. The Department has entered the June 2026 Statewide Special Election cycle.

A. The Department is currently facilitating candidate filings for the June 2, 2026, Statewide Special Election.

- i. On January 6, the Department closed the nomination period, during which individuals seeking to run for the Board of Supervisors in Districts 2 and 4 were able to obtain and submit all required nomination documents to the Department. The list of qualified candidates to appear on the ballot for each contest has been posted on the Department's website.
- ii. On February 4, the Department will conclude the signature-in-lieu period for candidates seeking election to the Board of Education and the Superior Court. Following this period, the Department will begin the nomination period for these offices on February 9.

B. The Department is currently facilitating the intake of local ballot measures and will continue through February 20.

C. This month, the Department began preparing for the Ballot Simplification Committee (BSC) meetings scheduled to begin on Monday, February 23, and to continue through Monday, March 9, or until the Committee completes its work, whichever occurs first.

VI. Responses to the Commission's request for information to be included in the Director's monthly report.

Data on registration rates and outreach events: 1) Total new registrations, 2) New registrations by supervisory districts, 3) Tactics employed (outreach, community engagement, grant funding, etc.) and in which districts, 4) Tactics employed by districts.

- A. Between December 1 and December 31, the Department processed a total of 1,732 affidavits of new registrants. The new registrants reside in the following Supervisorial Districts (SD): SD 1 – 105, SD 2 – 198, SD 3 – 191, SD 4 – 96, SD 5 – 192, SD 6 – 248, SD 7 – 117, SD 8 – 186, SD 9 – 141, SD 10 – 136, and SD 11 – 122.
- B. Between December 1 and December 31, the Department conducted 14 outreach events, reaching an estimated 1,621 attendees. These events were distributed across Supervisorial Districts (SD) as follows: SD 3 – 1, SD 5 – 4, SD 9 – 6, and SD 10 – 3.