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PRESS RELEASE



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RR/CC Kicks-Off Unprecedented Effort to Modernize County Voting Systems

Community Leaders, Election Advocates, Political Parties, and Local Election Officials Set Out to Define New Vision for the County's Future Voting Systems

Norwalk, CA—The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's Office kicked off an unprecedented initiative aimed at creating a road map for the eventual overhaul of the County's aging voting systems at a gathering of community stakeholders last Wednesday. The Voting Systems Assessment Project was the focus of an all day symposium hosted at the California Institute of Technology titled "*Technology, Diversity, and Democracy: The Future of Voting Systems in Los Angeles County*," with support from the Caltech-MIT Voting Technology Project. The event gathered more than 100 community leaders, election advocates, voters, political party representatives, and election administrators (representing city, county, state, and federal levels) to discuss and identify the current and future needs a new voting system will have to meet in serving the County's more than four million registered voters.

Addressing participants, Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, Dean C. Logan noted, "Over the past decade, the environment and demands under which elections are administered in Los Angeles County have become increasingly complex; challenged by a growing and diverse electorate, an aging voting system, a fluid regulatory environment that has limited voting systems development, and the recent phenomenon of special vacancy elections. The goal of the Voting Systems Assessment Project is to ensure that as we navigate the complex environment of voting systems and election law that the needs of our voters and the core principles associated with accessible and transparent elections serve as our guide in this process."

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“For too long the acquisition of voting systems has been about Election Officials’ reaction to the regulatory environment and the voting systems market, rather than the market and regulatory environment reacting to the needs of the voters,” added Logan.

Participants also heard from U.S. Election Assistance Commissioner Donetta Davidson, who praised the process and hoped that at the conclusion of LA County’s initiative other jurisdictions will seek to follow a similar model of citizen participation in the design and implementation of new voting systems.

The event featured focus group discussions where participants tackled core voting systems issues such as accessibility, security & accuracy, usability, and flexibility. The goal of the focus groups was to allow the diverse stakeholders to define the needs and principles by which each of these factors can be measured, specifically as it pertains to the unique needs of Los Angeles County. "Such a process is invaluable," said June Lagmay, Los Angeles City Clerk, who was present at the event. "You can develop the most sophisticated, state-of-the-art voting system, but if it does not meet the needs and expectations of your voters, you will have failed in your obligation as a responsible voting official. A good voting system must facilitate the will of the people through a medium that people accept," concluded Lagmay.

Among the organizations participating in the forum was the League of Women Voters. Commenting about the symposium, Thea Brodtkin, Director for the League of Women Voters of California noted, "I believe the symposium was a good start for collecting community values/ideas to include in what is a particularly complex process [Elections]."

Los Angeles County is one of the nation’s largest counties and includes some of the most diverse election jurisdictions in the country. Its electorate is larger than voting populations in thirty-eight of the fifty states in the union. Additionally, the County provides election information and assistance in six different languages other than English (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese), in compliance with the Voting Rights Act. Many of these complexities are not unique to Los Angeles County but, they are compounded not only by the size and diversity of the jurisdiction but also by the current state of its voting system. Through

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this project the Registrar plans to outline a strategic plan for the County Board of Supervisors and Chief Executive Office, which will present a series of recommendations aimed at identifying and implementing a new voting system for Los Angeles County voters.

The first convening served as a starting point to identify the fundamental principles that will drive subsequent roundtables specifically focused on ease of use, technology, legal requirements, and regulatory framework. The meetings to be held October through December of 2009 will draw on a diverse array of experts, from computer scientists, academics, and other voting technology experts to policy makers and regulatory agencies – to contribute to the planning effort. A parallel dialogue with voters, students and community organizations will continue throughout the project. The Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk will invite voters to provide input by creating a project page on its website— www.lavote.net.

Persons requiring multilingual assistance in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog/Filipino, or Vietnamese can call (800) 481-8683.

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