

# Public Communications Guide

## Presidential Primary Election

**March 3, 2020**



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Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

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Registration & Elections Division  
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OFFICE OF  
**ASSESSOR-COUNTY CLERK-  
RECORDER & ELECTIONS**  
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

**MARK CHURCH**  
CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER &  
ASSESSOR-COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER

Dear Election Partners:

It is my pleasure to present our Public Communications Guide for the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election.

We will be conducting the Presidential Primary Election under the Voter's Choice Act. This new election model will generate questions and comments from voters, candidates, interest groups, community organizations, the media and others.

To help you understand and provide accurate and accessible information about election rules, procedures, dates and activities, and to do so with uniformity among all the members and volunteers within your organization, we put together this reference guide. We ask you to share this guide with each one of your associates who will be communicating with voters.

The Public Communications Guide contains:

1. Important Dates and Deadlines
2. The Mechanics of the All-Mailed Ballot-Vote Center Election
3. Frequently Asked Questions
4. Tools and Resources

As always, our in-house team will field many calls and inquiries, but many voters will call you as a trusted and familiar source of information. Please don't hesitate to refer people to our office for assistance or additional information at 650.312.5222 or [registrar@smcacre.org](mailto:registrar@smcacre.org). Our election website, [www.smcvote.org](http://www.smcvote.org), is also a great resource for you and the public.

Please direct questions related to this document to our Elections Supervisors, Martin McTaggart at 650.312.5316 or [mmctaggart@smcacre.org](mailto:mmctaggart@smcacre.org) and Michael Lui at 650.312.5238 or [MLui@smcacre.org](mailto:MLui@smcacre.org).

Sincerely,

Mark Church

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## Important Dates and Deadlines

See Elections Website Calendar: [www.smcacre.org/post/mar2020-election-calendar](http://www.smcacre.org/post/mar2020-election-calendar)

## Mechanics of the All-Mailed Ballot- Vote Center Election

### All-Mailed Ballot - Vote Center Elections

San Mateo County will conduct the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election as an All-Mailed Ballot - Vote Center Election.

On February 3, 2020, every voter in the county will be mailed an Official Ballot, postage paid return envelope and voting instructions. Delivery of the official ballots by the U.S. Postal Service to an individual voter will depend on the voter's local mail service. Many voters will vote as soon as they get the official ballot.

Voters may return the ballot through the mail using the postage paid return envelope. Returned ballots postmarked on or before March 3 will be accepted provided the ballots are received by March 6.

Voters can also return their official ballots in-person at the Ballot Drop Box Locations, Vote Centers or Ballot Drop Box Boxes.

In order for a ballot to be counted:

1. The ballot **MUST** be received on time.
2. The voter's signature on the return envelope **MUST** match the signature in the voter's registration record.

### Ballot Drop Box Locations

33 accessible Ballot Drop Box Locations will be available beginning 29 days before Election Day\*\*. Outdoor Ballot Drop Boxes at the Belmont City Hall, Belmont Library, Daly City City Hall, East Palo Alto Government Center, Foster City City Hall, Pescadero Fire Station 59, San Mateo City Hall, South San Francisco City Hall, and the Registration & Division in San Mateo will be open 24/7.

### Ballot Drop-off Locations

See Elections Website: <https://www.smcacre.org/ballot-drop-box-locations>

### Ballot Drop Box Locations Hours of Operation

- Nine secure outdoor ballot Drop Box are available 24/7 until March 3 at 8 p.m.
- Thirty-two secure indoor Ballot Drop Boxes

- Open February 3 to March 3 during the hours of operation of each location.

\* Note: City Hall Ballot Drop Box Locations are open during regular city hall business hours including on Election Day. City Hall hours may vary.

+ Under California Elections Code Section 4005, “a vote center that includes an exterior ballot drop box counts only as a single ballot drop location.”

### Vote Centers

A complete list of Vote Centers can be found on our website here:

<https://www.smcacre.org/vote-center-locations>

An interactable Vote Center search/locator can be found on our website here:

<https://www.smcacre.org/vote/all>

Voters may drop off ballots, get a new ballot or vote independently and privately on a ballot marking tablet at any Vote Center. All Vote Centers are accessible, and personnel will be on site to help voters requesting assistance.

### Vote Center Hours



**Ballots will be mailed out starting on February 3rd.  
Drop off your voted ballot or vote in person at any of our 42 Vote Centers:**

Dates Open	Number of Vote Centers	Business Hours
February 3 to February 21*	Three Vote Centers will be open.	Weekdays and February 22 to 23 (Weekend) 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
February 22 to February 28	Nine Vote Centers will be open.	
February 29 to March 2	Total of Forty-Two Vote Centers will be open.	Weekdays and February 29 to March 1 (Weekend) 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
March 3 (Election Day)	All Forty-Two Vote Centers will be open.	7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

\*Vote Centers will be open on Presidents' Day, Monday, February 17.

More information on Vote Centers can be found on our website here:

[www.smcacre.org/smcvote](http://www.smcacre.org/smcvote)

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Why is San Mateo County conducting the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election as an All-Mailed Ballot – Vote Center Election?**

A: Senate Bill 450, also known as the California Voter’s Choice Act (VCA), was signed into law on September 29, 2016, authorizing any California county, including San Mateo, to conduct any election as an All-Mailed Ballot - Vote Center Election commencing in 2020. This legislation was part of a broad collection of election reforms designed to increase voter participation, increase voter engagement, and expand voting options, fundamentally changing how elections will be conducted in San Mateo County and participating jurisdictions.

**Q: What are the benefits of holding the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election as an All-Mailed – Vote Center Ballot Election?**

A: There are several potential benefits to this program for both voters and districts.

1. Increased Voter Participation – In looking at San Mateo County’s own history of conducting countywide All-Mailed Ballot- Vote Center Elections, the county saw an increase of 10% in voter turnout from a traditional polling place countywide special election to an all-mailed ballot special election. It is expected that a similar increase will be seen in March.
2. Increased Efficiency and Effectiveness – Through real time access to countywide voter registration records at Vote Centers voter eligibility questions will be identified and resolved, which will dramatically reduce provisional voting. As well, unofficial results on Election Night will be reported faster as fewer locations will deliver ballots to the Registration & Elections Division office on Election Night.
3. Voter Convenience – Voters will now have a ballot in hand beginning 29 days before Election Day. Voters may choose to return their ballot by mail with a postage paid return envelope or drop it off at 33 accessible Ballot Drop Box locations throughout the County at any time during the 30-day voting period. They may also choose to cast their ballot in person at 42 of our Vote Centers during the 30-day voting period.

**Q: What are the requirements of VCA for the March 3, 2020 election?**

A: Under the VCA, every voter will receive their ballot in the mail with a postage paid return envelope. The law requires that Vote Centers and Ballot Drop Box locations be accessible to voters with disabilities, located near population centers, public transportation and near low-income and language minority communities.

**Q: Do I have to vote by mail?**

A: No. San Mateo County voters may vote in person at any Vote Center in the county, with the first Vote Centers open 29 days before the election, and 42 Vote Centers open on Election Day. Information on Vote Centers can be found on our website here: <https://www.smcacre.org/vote-center-locations>.

**Q: If I live in Redwood City and want to vote in person on Election Day, will I have to go to the Redwood City Vote Center?**

A: No. One of the many benefits of the VCA is that voters can cast their ballots at any Vote Center countywide.

**Q: When will I receive my ballot in the mail?**

A: Ballots will be sent out beginning 29 days prior to Election Day (February 3, 2020). If a voter doesn't receive their ballot by February 25, 2020, they should contact our office by phone at 650.312.5222 or by email at registrar@smcacre.org. Voters can also vote in person at a Vote Center on or before Election Day.

**Q: Will the City Clerk's Office have a ballot box?**

A: Yes, as in prior elections, we will continue to have ballot boxes available for drop off beginning 29 days prior to Election Day at each City Clerk's office in the County. Voters can drop off their ballots during regular business hours of each city/town.

**Q: I missed the voter registration deadline; can I still vote?**

A: Yes. You can now register and vote the same day at any Vote Center all the way through Election Day.

**Q: Is the Registration & Elections Division going to do any outreach for those voters who don't usually vote by mail?**

A: Yes. It is very important that our office conduct a thorough outreach and media campaign. Voters who don't usually vote by mail will be alerted that they will receive a ballot by mail this February. The Elections Division will be contacting voters several times before and throughout the voting period to ensure that voters are aware the election will be conducted by all-mailed ballot. These extra mailings are an additional way our office can get address updates for voters in the county.

Our office will also be working with different media platforms to get the message out. This includes television, radio and newspaper that cater to the major language preferences of our voters (English, Spanish and Chinese). We will use social media, billboards and voter outreach events throughout the county to inform our voters.

**Q: Does my vote by mail ballot need to reach the Elections Office by 8 p.m. on Election Night to count?**

A: No. On September 26, 2014, Governor Brown signed into law SB 29. This law states that as long as a vote by mail ballot is postmarked on or before Election Day and received within three calendar days, it will be counted. Accordingly, for the March 3, 2020 election, all ballots that are postmarked on or before March 3, 2020 and received by March 6, 2020 are on time. This legislation is for all elections, not just those under the California Voter's Choice Act.

**Q: Is there anything else I should know?**

A: Yes! San Mateo County is excited to be a part of this new law and we believe that it will greatly benefit voters, providing voting options and increasing voter participation. Please contact our office at 650.312.5222 or registrar@smcacre.org if you have any further questions.

## Tools and Resources

### Community and Voter Outreach Materials

The San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division is conducting a comprehensive outreach program which is described on our website [www.smcacre.org/california-voters-choice-act](http://www.smcacre.org/california-voters-choice-act).

There you can view our:

- Community & Voter Outreach Plan which details how we will use technology, traditional media, direct-to-vote mailings and community engagement to increase voter participation in the All-Mailed Ballot – Vote Center Election.
- Voter Outreach Event Schedule
- Community Partners
- Downloadable Outreach Tool Kit which contains the following resources:
  1. Community & Voter Outreach Plan (PDF)
  2. Public Communications Guide
  3. Media ToolKit with ready-to-print articles, slides for electronic displays, ad art, lists of hashtags, links and stickers for public use.
  4. All-Mailed Ballot – Vote Center Election Brochure
  5. Voting Options and Locations Brochure
  6. California Voter’s Choice Act Brochure

### Shuttle Services

Since there will be fewer polling places during this all-mailed ballot election, voters may want to plan transportation to and from the Voting Centers and City or Town Halls. We have alerted San Mateo County Paratransit to this need. If a voter is certified to use Redi-Wheels, they should call the number on their card at least one day in advance or call the SamTrans customer service center at 1.800.660.4287.

### Online Voter Registration

Voters may now register to vote online at [www.registertovote.ca.gov](http://www.registertovote.ca.gov). The deadline to register for this election is midnight on February 18, 2020. See our website [www.smcacre.org/register-vote](http://www.smcacre.org/register-vote) for more information about registering to vote.

### Personalized Voter Information and Resources

Voters can receive personalized voting information on our website at [www.smcacre.org/my-election-info](http://www.smcacre.org/my-election-info).

This convenient tool allows voters to access information at every stage of the election process. By entering his or her house number, zip code, and birth date (mmddyy) into the form, the voter will be able to:

- Confirm their voter registration status
- Find Vote Center information for this election
- View and/or Print the Sample Ballot & Official Voter Information Pamphlet
- Request a replacement Vote by Mail ballot
- Track & confirm the dates the ballot was mailed to the voter and received by the Elections Office

#### Important Websites

- San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division  
[www.smcacre.org](http://www.smcacre.org)  
@SMCvote
- California Secretary of State  
[www.sos.ca.gov](http://www.sos.ca.gov)  
@CASOSvote
- League of Women Voters  
[votersedge.org](http://votersedge.org)

## Sample Articles for Community News

We have drafted samples of articles you may like to use in newsletters or other venues to give your community more information about the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election. Feel free to copy, paste and send.

### A. Approximately 150 words

Need-to-Knows about March's All-Mailed – Vote Center Ballot Election:

#### WHEN?

- Watch for your ballot in the mail the week of February 3, 2020
- Voter Registration closes on February 18, 2020. Pick up a paper voter registration card or go online [registertovote.ca.gov](http://registertovote.ca.gov) by midnight February 18. Postmarks count.
- Voters not registered can still vote. Stop by at a Vote Center in the County, register and vote.
- Return your ballot by Election Day, March 3, 2020. Postmarks count.

#### WHERE?

- At home, at work, or on the go! Cast a Vote-by-Mail ballot starting February 3
- Vote Center (three locations starting February 3, nine locations starting February 22, and 42 locations starting February 29)
- 42 Vote Centers and 33 Ballot Drop Box locations

#### HOW?

- Vote-by-Mail: US Postal Service. Return or postmark your ballot by March 3
- Drop Off Voted Mail Ballot at any Vote Center or Ballot Drop Box Locations in San Mateo County open regular business hours February 3 through 8 p.m. on Election Day
- Vote in Person at a Vote Center starting February 3

#### WHAT?

- [www.smcacre.org/current-election](http://www.smcacre.org/current-election) shows what is up for election
- [www.smcacre.org/my-election-info](http://www.smcacre.org/my-election-info) shows what is on YOUR ballot

**B. Approximately 250 words**

The March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election will be conducted as an All-Mailed Ballot – Vote Center Election under California Voter’s Choice Act. This means that on Election Day, we won’t see you at the XXXXXX [your community’s regular polling place], but we may see you at the XXXXXXXX [Nearest Vote Center in your community] or elsewhere.

Every voter is mailed a ballot starting February 3. If you haven’t received it by February 12, contact the Registration & Elections Division at 650.312.5222 or registrar@smcacre.org. Voted ballots can be returned by mail (free postage), returned at any Ballot Drop Box or in person at any Vote Center.

Three Vote Centers will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from February 3 to February 21 (weekdays only). 9 Vote Centers will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from February 22 to February 28. 42 Vote Centers will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from February 29 to March 2. All 42 Vote Centers will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on March 3 (Election Day). You can drop off your voted ballot, get a new or replacement ballot or vote on a ballot marking tablet, but you don’t have to hurry home to the XXXXXX [your community’s regular polling place] because all Vote Centers can accommodate any voter. Check your Sample Ballot Pamphlet or [www.smcacre.org](http://www.smcacre.org) for location details.

On the ballot: XXXXXXXXXX [See [www.smcacre.org/current-election](http://www.smcacre.org/current-election) for info]

The California Voter’s Choice Act changes the traditional polling place election model to an All-Mailed Ballot – Vote Center model with Ballot Drop Box locations. The primary goal of this new legislation is to expand accessibility and voting opportunities for all voters, particularly those with disabilities, visual impairments and language minorities. San Mateo County is proud to be one of 15 counties conducting the Presidential Primary Election under the new law.

### **C. Approximately 370 words**

Dear Voter,

As the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election approaches, we are providing you with the information you need to register to vote and to cast a ballot.

Important Dates: Vote-by-Mail Ballots will be mailed February 3. The deadline to register to vote is February 18, 2020. Ballots must be returned or postmarked by Election Day, March 3, 2020.

Mail-in ballots have become the preferred voting method for voters in San Mateo County. In response to this trend, Senate Bill 450, California Voter's Choice Act, was signed into law on September 29, 2016 allowing San Mateo County to conduct any election as an All-Mailed Ballot - Vote Center election commencing in 2018.

Ballots will be mailed on February 3. If you don't receive a ballot by February 12, contact the San Mateo County Elections Division at 650.312.5222 or [registrar@smcacre.org](mailto:registrar@smcacre.org).

We encourage you to vote from the comfort of your home. You can either mail your Vote-by-Mail ballot for free through the USPS or drop it off at any Vote Centers or Ballot Drop Box locations. Drop off locations will be available starting February 3.

You can also drop off your ballot, get a new or replacement ballot or vote on a ballot marking tablet at one of our 43 Vote Centers. Vote Centers open on February 3. The ballot marking tablets allow anyone to vote privately and independently. There are various features that make them accessible and compatible with adaptive devices.

On Election Day, 43 Vote Centers will be located throughout the county. Vote Centers operate similar to polling places, allowing voters to cast their ballots in person, whether on paper or on a ballot marking tablet. Voters will also be able to register to vote or update their registration at any Vote Center. Voters who have not registered before the close of registration (February 18) will be able to complete a Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) at any Vote Center and cast a provisional ballot through Election Day.

If you would like to learn more, please visit [www.smcacre.org](http://www.smcacre.org) where you can find in-depth information on this upcoming election, including Vote Center and Ballot Drop Box location addresses and hours of operation.

Let's go vote!

Regards,

Your name

## Suggested Hashtags

### Specific to March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election

- MoreDaysMoreWays
- #DontDelayVoteToday
- #MarchPrimaryElection
- #PresidentialPrimaryElection
- #smcVote2020
- #smcvote

## Links and Website Buttons

- California Voter's Choice Act: SB 450 [www.smcacre.org/california-voters-choice-act](http://www.smcacre.org/california-voters-choice-act)
- Register to Vote: [registertovote.ca.gov/](http://registertovote.ca.gov/)
- My Info: [www.smcacre.org/check-my-registrationaccess-my-election-materials](http://www.smcacre.org/check-my-registrationaccess-my-election-materials)
- Go Green!: [www.smcacre.org/go-green](http://www.smcacre.org/go-green)
- Twitter @smcvote: [twitter.com/smcvote](https://twitter.com/smcvote)
- Instagram @smcvote: <https://www.instagram.com/smcvote/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CountyofSanMateo>
- YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/democracylive](http://www.youtube.com/user/democracylive)
- Subscribe to Our Mailing List:  
[service.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASMATEO/subscriber/new](http://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASMATEO/subscriber/new)
- Inscribirse para Votar: [registertovote.ca.gov/zh/](http://registertovote.ca.gov/zh/)
- 登記投票: [registertovote.ca.gov/zh/](http://registertovote.ca.gov/zh/)
- [Voter Registration](#)
- [Voting Options](#)
- [Candidates & Campaigns](#)
- [Elections](#)
- [Election Officers](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Español](#)
- [中文](#)