



LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

DEAN C. LOGAN

Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

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TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
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FROM: Dean C. Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

ONLINE CANDIDATE STATEMENT FULL IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT

This report will provide an update on the full implementation of the Online Candidate Statement Program for nonpartisan County offices and judicial positions and the expansion to local jurisdictions, as directed by a motion adopted by your Board on April 4, 2023.

Background

Los Angeles County provides candidate statements of qualifications (Candidate Statements) in the sample ballot books, mailed to registered voters in applicable elections. Candidate Statements are optional, and candidates are responsible for the costs associated with the printing of the statements. Due to the size and diversity of the Los Angeles County electorate, the printing of Candidate Statements can be costly for some candidates. This can lead to voters receiving statements from candidates who have the financial resources to pay for those printed statements, and not from candidates who have fewer resources.

On February 15, 2022, your Board adopted a motion instructing the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (Department) to implement a pilot program for Online Candidate Statements for the 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election and the 2022 General Election. Your Board directed the Department to report back with the results of the pilot program and recommendations for continuing and expanding the program. The Department implemented and conducted the Online Candidate Statement Pilot Program for the 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election and the 2022 General Election.

The Online Candidate Statement Pilot Program aimed to expand voter access to Candidate Statements and provide candidates with a lower-cost option to reach voters. The pilot program allowed Candidate Statements to be published on the Department's

website for nonpartisan County offices and judicial positions, as authorized by California Elections Code 13307(c), which made it possible to gather information regarding costs, candidate requests, and voter usage for possible expansion or updates in future election cycles.

In the 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election, there were fifty-eight candidates eligible to submit an online Candidate Statement. This included the offices of Supervisorial District 1, Supervisorial District 3, Assessor, Sheriff, and Judge of the Superior Court. Of the fifty-eight eligible candidates, fifty candidates pursued this option for a participation rate of 86%.

In the 2022 General Election, there were sixteen candidates eligible to submit an Online Candidate Statement. This included the offices of Supervisorial District 3, Sheriff, and Judge of the Superior Court. Of the sixteen eligible candidates, thirteen candidates pursued this option for a participation rate of 81%. As evidenced in both election cycles, the majority of candidates opted for the publication of an Online Candidate Statement.

On February 8, 2023, the Department presented a report with these findings and recommended full implementation for nonpartisan County offices of the Online Candidate Statements Program. On April 4, 2023, your Board adopted a motion instructing the Department to fully implement the Online Candidate Statement Program; explore the feasibility of expansion to other local jurisdictions including advocating for any legislative changes that would grant the Department the authority to offer the service to other local jurisdictions; establish a cost-recovery model that maintains cost-effectiveness; review options to make printed Candidate Statements more cost accessible; and report back within 180 days on the status of the program expansion.

Full Implementation for County Offices

The Department is prepared to fully implement Online Candidate Statements for nonpartisan County offices for the March 2024 Presidential Primary Election. California Elections Code 13307(c) grants the Department authority to implement Online Candidate Statements with your Board's approval, which was granted on April 4, 2023. As detailed in this report, the necessary resources have been identified and a cost-recovery model has been developed.

Expansion to Local Jurisdictions

To make Online Candidate Statements available to candidates for local offices, California Elections Code 13307(c) provides that the jurisdiction's governing body must authorize the use of these statements. For example, City Councils and School Boards must include authority for Online Candidate Statements in their resolutions requesting the County to administer their election. These resolutions must be received by the Department by November 6, 2023, for the use of Online Candidate Statements in any local jurisdiction.

To further expand the ability to make Online Candidate Statements available to candidates for local offices, the Department is working in collaboration with CEO Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations (LAIR) and the California Association of Clerks and Elections Officials (CACEO) to propose and advocate for legislation to grant the Department, as the election administrator, authority to make Online Candidate Statements available for candidates in any jurisdiction for which the County is conducting an election as the elections official or providing services to conduct an election. Proposals were submitted to both CEO LAIR and CACEO for consideration. If accepted, both entities will work to identify a sponsor and advocate for the bill. If the bill is signed into law, it will be effective January 2025. This will allow further expansion of the program to all local jurisdictions in the County, without the need of individual councils and boards to approve for the candidates in their jurisdiction.

Online Candidate Statement Fees

The Department conducted a fee analysis, in conjunction with the Auditor-Controller, and has determined the fee for recovery of estimated costs associated with the production of Online Candidate Statements is \$279.60 per statement. Estimated costs include staff time associated with accepting, reviewing, and posting the statements. By comparison, candidates paid up to \$250,000 for printed Candidate Statements for a Countywide contest during the 2020 and 2022 elections. This fee will be presented to Operations Cluster on September 27, 2023, and is expected to be presented for consideration on the October 17, 2023, Board agenda.

Printed Sample Ballot Fees

In conjunction with the implementation and expansion of Online Candidate Statements, your Board directed the Department to review options that would make printed Candidate Statements more affordable. The costs of printed Candidate Statements are dictated by the costs of producing Sample Ballots; in order to reduce costs of printed Candidate Statements, the costs of Sample Ballot production must be reduced. With that goal, the Department has evaluated both the design of the Sample Ballot, as well as the process for producing it.

In conjunction with the production vendor, the Department has redesigned the pagination of the Sample Ballot to reduce the number of pages, without omitting legally required election information. While the Elections Code provides that certain information be included in the Sample Ballot, the Department has reviewed the pages and language to ensure that information is included in a streamlined, concise manner. This led to the consolidation of key information and therefore reduction of the number of pages in the Sample Ballot.

Additionally, the vendor has agreed to put in place, a new and modernized process that will further reduce the average costs of Sample Ballot production. This will require amendments to the current contract and the acquisition of new resources by the vendor. The new process is expected to be in place in time for the production of Sample Ballots

for the Presidential General Election in November 2024. Early estimates predict that this contract amendment can lead to approximately five hundred thousand dollars in aggregate cost reductions for printing Sample Ballots for a Countywide election. For example, this may result in up to a \$7,000 cost reduction for candidates who choose to pay for a printed statement in a Countywide election.

Implementation Timeline

The period for Candidate Filing and Filing of Candidate Statements for the Presidential Primary Election is November 13, 2023 through December 8, 2023. Online Candidate Statements will be posted on the Department’s website beginning on January 25, 2024; the same day the mailing of Sample Ballots begins and eleven days before the mailing of Vote by Mail (VBM) ballots begins. These statements will be available through the end of the voting period, scheduled for March 5, 2024.

Candidate Statements Accepted	Online Candidate Statement Posted	Sample Ballots Mailing Begins	Vote by Mail Mailing Begins	Election Day
11/13/23-12/08/23	01/25/24	01/25/24	02/05/24	03/05/24

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at (562) 462-2716 or dlogan@rrcc.lacounty.gov. Your staff may also contact Chief Deputy Jeramy Gray at (562) 462-2883 or jgray@rrcc.lacounty.gov.

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