

The County Of Nevada



CLERK RECORDER-REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

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2018 Election Sets High Standards For Faster Vote Counting, Record Turnout

By Gregory J. Diaz
Nevada County Clerk-Recorder
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The Gubernatorial Primary Election this month in Nevada County is wrapping up as one of the most successful in our history. Among the wealth of statistics are these shiny nuggets:

- All votes will be tabulated by 5:00 PM, June 22 — two weeks earlier than ever before.
- This despite near record voter turnout — 56.94% of eligible voters cast ballots, a full 12% more than in the 2014 gubernatorial election (44.58%)
- Mail-in balloting was popular in the extreme — 95% of votes cast were by mail.

Those are the highlights, but there were many other indications that Nevada County voters have embraced the new way of voting, the Voters Choice Act, in which our county was among just five in the state utilizing new mechanisms and procedures to enhance the voting process, while making voting more secure than before.

In the month preceding the election, from May 7 through June 4, 20,665 Vote by Mail ballots were returned, and 298 voted in person. Then, on June 5, Election Day, more than 11,144 Vote by Mail ballots arrived at our offices, and 1,570 citizens voted at one of the eight comprehensive Vote Centers established for the election.

Voter satisfaction can be gauged by the fact that complaints — either by phone or in writing — were noticeably reduced. And for 563 county residents, they were able to register to vote, and vote, on Election Day at any Vote Center. This was not only a first for us, but also a service that very few counties could offer.

Preparation for this election began more than a year earlier, in April 2017, with several outreach and education efforts, including an hour-long presentation for each District Supervisor. Committees were formed to focus on language, accessibility and education; a total of 16 public presentations were made throughout the county.

Then, nearly a month before the election, eight Drop Box locations were established and eight in-person vote centers. Two of the in-person centers opened May 26; five more were open from June 2 through June 5, and one more opened on Election Day, providing eleven days in which voters could cast ballots in person.

The 95% of voters who cast ballots by mail wasn't totally unexpected. In the past, more than 80% of Nevada County voters chose the mail-in option. That was a principal reason why I advocated for adopting the Voters

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Choice Act in our county. Because we are a rural county, setting up, hiring and training staff and maintaining 49 separate polling stations, our long-time practice, was increasingly difficult and expensive.

Going forward, the investment we have made in new voting equipment will result in significant savings for Nevada County taxpayers: more than \$1 million by the time 2020 elections are completed.

The success of this election would not have been possible without the dedicated teamwork of the elections staff, headed by Sandy Sjoberg, Abby Kelly, Teal Caddy and Kristian Hamilton. They were responsible for, among other things, closely examining every ballot cast to assure that each signature was valid, that each vote cast was legitimate.

On a personal note, I thank the voters of Nevada County for demonstrating their confidence in me by returning me to office once again. I pledge to continue to manage the offices of Clerk-Recorder and Registrar of Voters to benefit all our citizens.

I would also like to congratulate my opponents for their initiative in running for public office, and for the admirable tone of their campaigns. I believe it is of vital importance that all citizens take a healthy interest in our government, including striving to serve in public office.

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