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## MERCED COUNTY ELECTION OBSERVER PANEL PLAN

Name of County: Merced County  
Name of Contact: Barbara J. Levey, Registrar of Voters  
Contact Phone: (209) 385-7541 or (800) 561-0619  
Date of Plan: **Revised, September 24, 2020**

### I. **VOTING SYSTEM USED: ES&S DS450, DS850, & ExpressVote**

- ExpressVote accessible ballot marking devices;
- DS450 & DS850 central count units for counting vote by mail ballots and provisional ballots as part of the canvass.

### II. **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of an Election Observer Panel is to:

- Provide the public with the opportunity to observe and make suggestions on ways to improve the election process.
- Help ensure the integrity of the election process.
- Remove some of the mystery associated with the election process in an effort to build voter confidence and encourage more people to take part.

### III. **INVITE**

Between E-60 and E-30, prepare letters of invitation to the following:

- County Grand Jury
- Political Party Central Committee Members
- Advocacy Groups
- League of Women Voters

Other groups or individuals expressing an interest in observing Election Day activities may also be included in the observer panel.

### IV. **APPOINTMENT LETTERS**

After the groups have provided the names of interested panelists, prepare letters of introduction for the panelist to use when visiting Voting Assistance Centers (VAC's) on Election Day. Materials to be prepared for each panelist will include a listing of all Voting Assistance Centers within the county for that specific election as well as the central counting site location (subject to limitations due to COVID concerns and social distancing) and hours of operation.

## **V. GENERAL RULES FOR OBSERVERS**

### **COVID-19 specific rules:**

- All observers must wear face coverings.
- Observers must maintain physical distancing of six feet and may be asked to remain in a designated area.
- Observers can be asked to take other safety measures such as hand hygiene, cough etiquette and general respect for cleanliness and sanitation.
- Observation is primarily an audio-visual activity, and video, particularly if supplemented by audio, may be an appropriate substitute in some situations for physical attendance during election processing in light of COVID-19.

### **Observers may:**

- Observe the proceedings at the VAC's, including the opening and closing procedures.
- Make notes and watch election procedures.
- View election-related activities at the central counting site (subject to limitations due to COVID concerns and social distancing) on Election Day.
- View the canvass of the vote activities following the election.
- View vote-by-mail and provisional ballot processing.
- Ask questions of poll workers or voters at the VAC's as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of any part of the voting process.
- Ask questions of supervisors at the central count site (subject to limitations due to COVID concerns and social distancing) as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of the election procedures.

### **Observers are responsible for:**

- Checking in at each site, whether polling place or central counting site.
- Wearing an identification badge.
- Maintaining a professional manner while observing the election process.
- Ensuring they do not interfere with the election process.
- Following established county observation rules/policies.
- Being courteous to election workers and election officials. Speak to them only when it is convenient and does not interfere with the conduct of the election.

### **Observers may not:**

- Interfere, in the judgement of the elections official, with the conduct of the election.
- Physically handle any voting materials or equipment without the express permission of the elections official.
- Move or rearrange tables, chairs, or voting booths at the polling place or central counting facility.
- Sit at the official worktables or view confidential voter information on any work terminal.
- Communicate with voters within 100 feet of the entrance to, or inside of, a Voting Assistance Center, an elections official's office, or a satellite location, regarding the casting of a vote, or speak to a voter regarding his or her qualifications to vote.
- Display any election material or wear campaign badges, buttons or apparel.
- Wear the uniform of a peace officer, a private guard, or security personnel.
- Use cellular phones, pagers, or two-way radios inside the polling place and/or within 100 feet of the entrance to the VAC.

- Use telephones, computers or other polling place facilities at VAC's or the central counting site.
- Talk to or attempt to stop the central counting site workers while they are processing ballots.
- Make physical contact with election personnel.
- Eat or drink in the VAC's or the central counting site.
- Assist in operations at any VAC or the central counting site.
- Prevent other observers from observing materials or a process.
- Enter secure areas without the express permission of the elections official.

### **Mechanism for Feedback –**

Merced Elections welcomes feedback from Observers. We ask that you contact us directly during your observation period if you see an activity or action that is concerning. Following the Election, we welcome your feedback related to processes, equipment, the Observer training that you received as well as overall observations.

Please remember that the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election is a mail ballot election. All active registered voters will receive an official ballot by mail. Voting Assistance Center services will include:

- Language services including the Multilingual Virtual Poll Worker
- Accessible voting equipment
- Replacement of lost or damaged ballot
- Same day voter registration and voting