Future of California Elections
How voters get information: Guidelines & recommendations

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@civicdesign

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civicdesign.org/projects/how-voters-get-information/
About the project

- 1 year
- 38+ partners
- 58 counties
- 100 research participants
  - Voters, non voters, infrequent voters
  - Young, new citizens, low literacy, people with disabilities, language minorities
- And many miles
It took many amazing people

**Election officials:** Cathy Darling Allen (Shasta County), Jill Fox & Barbara Carr (San Francisco), Neal Kelley (Orange County), Dean Logan (Los Angeles County), Gail Pellerin (Santa Cruz County), Kari Verjil, Rebecca Spencer & Art Tinoco (Riverside County), Michael Vu (San Diego County), Debbie O’Donoghue & Nicole Winger (California Secretary of State’s office), Mac Taylor, Brian Brown & Jason Sisney (California Legislative Affairs Office)

**FOCE Members and other advocacy groups:** Tanzila Ahmed, Deanna Kitamura, Eugene Lee, and Nathanel Lowe (Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles), Kim Alexander (California Voter Foundation), Caroline Bruister (California Forward), Kathay Feng (California Common Cause), Almas Haider (South Asian Network), Rosalind Gold and Ofelia Medina (National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Education Fund), Eileen Ma (API Equality - LA), Fred Nisen and Bill Hershon (Disability Rights California), Michelle Romero (The Greenlining Institute), Bo Sivanunsakul (Thai Community Development Center), Sabrina Smith (California Calls), Susan Stuart Clark (Common Knowledge), Ernie Ting (Smart Voter), Raquel Beltran (League of Women Voters of Los Angeles), Thea Brodkin (League of Women Voters of Santa Monica), Kathy Souza & Mony Flores-Bauer (League of Women Voters of California, Voter Service Directors)

**Research hosts and recruiting assistance:** Berkeley Reads / Linda Sakamoto-Jahnke, Billy DeFrank Lesbian and Gay Community Center, California Community Foundation, CAUSE / Carrie Gan, Ed Roberts Campus/ Fred Nisen and Dmitri Belser, Los Angeles County Clerk’s office / Dean Logan, Efrain Escobedo and Monica Flores, Modesto Parks & Recreation Staff, NALEO / Ofelia Media, Alberto Avalos, St. John the Baptist Church
Three big insights

- Plain language can't be overemphasized
- Civic literacy is a huge challenge
- Layout and visual presentation are important for comprehension
Two big sections of the guide

Large, clear groupings in the headings and table of contents helped voters understand what is in the voter guide.
Recommendations

- the right information
- organized in the right way
- presented so it is easy to read and understand
- and personalized for them
- helping address the civic literacy gap
Plain language

Let us tell you about Bill...
Voter Bill of Rights – recommended language

You have a right to...

- cast a ballot if you are a registered voter. You can register to vote if you are
  - a U.S. citizen
  - at least 18 years old
  - have been living in the state for x days
  - not in prison or on parole
  - registered to vote where you currently live.

- vote on a provisional ballot if your name is not on the list of registered voters.

- vote if you are in line when the polls close.

- cast a secret ballot without anyone bothering you or telling you how to vote.

- get a new ballot if you have made a mistake as long as you still have your old ballot. If you are at a polling place, ask an election official for a new ballot. If you vote by mail, you must give your original ballot to an election official before the polls close on Election Day before you can ask for a new ballot.

- get help voting and casting your ballot.

- turn in your completed vote-by-mail ballot at any polling place in the county where you are registered to vote.

- get election materials in a language other than English if enough people in your voting precinct need a ballot in that language.

- ask questions about election procedures and watch the election process. You can ask questions of election officials about procedures. The person you ask must answer your questions or send you to the right person for an answer. Please don’t ask questions while election officials are busy working.

- report anything happening in the polling place that is a crime or if you believe someone is not who they say they are.

If you believe you have been denied any of these rights, or see something that might be a crime, call the Secretary of State’s confidential toll-free Voter Hotline at (800) 345-8883

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Voter Bill of Rights – current language

1. You have the right to cast a ballot if you are a valid registered voter. A valid registered voter means a United States citizen who is a resident in the state, who is at least 18 years of age and not in prison or on parole for conviction of a felony, and who is registered to vote at his or her current residence address.

2. You have the right to cast a provisional ballot if your name is not listed on the voting rolls.

3. You have the right to cast a ballot if you are present and in line at the polling place prior to the close of the polls.

4. You have the right to cast a secret ballot free from intimidation.

5. You have the right to receive a new ballot if, prior to casting your ballot, you believe you made a mistake. If at any time before you finally cast your ballot, you feel you have made a mistake, you have the right to exchange the spoiled ballot for a new ballot. Vote-by-mail voters may also request and receive a new ballot if they return their spoiled ballot to an elections official prior to the closing of the polls on Election Day.

6. You have the right to receive assistance in casting your ballot, if you are unable to vote without assistance.

7. You have the right to return a completed vote-by-mail ballot to any precinct in the county.

8. You have the right to election materials in another language, if there are sufficient residents in your precinct to warrant production.

9. You have the right to ask questions about election procedures and observe the election process. You have the right to ask questions of the precinct board and elections officials regarding election procedures and receive an answer or be directed to the appropriate official for an answer. However, if persistent questioning disrupts the execution of their duties, the board or election officials may discontinue responding to questions.

10. You have the right to report any illegal or fraudulent activity to a local elections official or to the Secretary of State’s office.

If you believe you have been denied any of these rights or you are aware of any election fraud or misconduct, please call the Secretary of State’s confidential toll-free Voter Hotline at (800) 345-8883

Read it online: http://civicdesign.org/projects/how-voters-get-information/
Civic literacy

Elections are not intuitive
How many ways can you vote?

- vote by mail
- early voting
- vote at the polls
Identify options clearly

3 ways to vote

Vote by mail

Request a vote-by-mail ballot by October 29.
Return it by mail, drop it off at one of the secure ballot drop-off locations, or deliver it on November 6 to any polling place.
Vote-by-mail ballots must be received at the elections office or a polling place by 8pm on November 6.
For more details, see Page 4.

Vote early in person

You may vote early at the elections office, or at the voting centers listed on page 5.
October 7 until November 5
Monday – Friday, 8am to 5pm
Franklin County Elections Department
4321 Franklin Avenue
Franklin, CA
For more details, see Page 5.

Vote at the polls in person

Polls are open on Election Day:
November 6, from 7am to 8pm
The location of your polling place is printed on the back cover of this guide.
Or, you can look up your polling place:
• On the web: www.franklinvotes.org
• Using the automated phone service: 1-222-555-1216
For more details, see Page 6.
Help people ask the right questions and find the answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th># Asking</th>
<th>Variations of the question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s on the ballot?</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>• What’s on the ballot?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who do I support or vote for?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who is running?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who will I be voting for?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who are the candidates?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who supports the candidates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the candidates’ positions on [specific issue]?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the ballot measures?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the pros and cons for the measures?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does this measure mean a tax increase?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How does the official guide compare to the TV ads?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who is in office right now?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Help people answer their questions

Anticipate and answer voters' questions, rather than just telling them what we think they need to know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s in this guide?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 ways to vote</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Bill of Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>How to vote by mail</td>
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<td>How to vote early in person</td>
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<tr>
<td>How to vote in person at the polls</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessibility and language voting assistance</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s on the ballot for this election?</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are the candidates?</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paid candidate statements</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local ballot measures: E</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local ballot measures: F</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice ballot</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Layout and design

Making information easy to recognize
Layouts signal meaning
Layouts help reinforce meaning
Design supports navigation

### What’s in this guide?

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### What’s on the ballot for this election?

#### Franklin County Guide (this guide)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local and county issues and measures in this guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.75% levy on sales and use tax (Proposition E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal impact statement for Proposition E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters’ Guide to Franklin County Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### California State Guide

- 3.75% levy on sales and use tax (Proposition E)
- Fiscal impact statement for Proposition E
- Voters’ Guide to California Election
- Voters’ Guide to California Election

#### Local ballot measures: E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure E Franklin Community College District</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arguments in favor of Measure E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arguments against Measure E</td>
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<tr>
<td>For and against</td>
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<td>Appellant against Measure E</td>
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Recommendations
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- Include the right information at the appropriate level of detail
- Organize information for progressive disclosure
- Present information so it is easy to read and understand
- Personalize information for the voter
- Close civic literacy gaps through structure and content
## Write headings as questions or active instructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heading style</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Why it works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>What is the last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot?</td>
<td>Suggests a question that voters ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi-question</td>
<td>How to request a vote-by-mail ballot.</td>
<td>Suggests the answer the section contains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Request a vote-by-mail ballot by October 29.</td>
<td>Provides the answer, making the question implicit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use visuals to reinforce information about elections

What’s on the ballot for this election?

You will receive two voter information guides for this election:

- **Franklin County Guide (this guide)**: Local and county races and measures are in this guide.
- **California State Guide**: U.S. national races, and state races and state propositions are in the guide from the state.

Showing both voter guide covers helps voters understand that there are two booklets, and recognize them when they arrive.
Bite-snack-meal

The official term is "progressive disclosure"
Making it happen

Next steps
Change happens step by step

- The ideas come from the current voter guides... and voters
- A deepening of the Field Guides
- Don't be afraid to rethink
- Work the 'adjacent possible'
- But, some recommendations require legislation
Report, prototype, and other materials
civicdesign.org/projects/how-voters-get-information/

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Thank you.