

Approved: _____

Superior Court Judge

Date: _____

OCT 01 2012

SONOMA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

FILED

SEP 24 2012

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA,
COUNTY OF SONOMA

BY _____ DEPUTY CLERK

Report Title: Vote Green, Save Green – Vote by Mail

Report Date: June 28, 2012

Response by: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1 The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors support the Registrar of Voters in attempts to bolster the number of county residents who wish to vote by mail by assisting the Registrar to find funding to promote vote-by-mail participation.

Board of Supervisors' Response: This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future as funds become available.

The Board is committed to ensuring that the voters of Sonoma County have every opportunity to participate in the democratic process. Sonoma County has historically had high voter turnout and a robust Vote by Mail program. The Registrar of Voters' Office intends to increase outreach efforts encouraging voters to request Permanent Vote by Mail status using existing funds by redesigning mailers sent to all registered voters. More can be done to educate voters as to the advantages of participating in the Vote by Mail program. As funds become available for this purpose the Board will work with the Registrar to promote the Vote by Mail process.

R2 The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors support the Registrar of Voters need to replace the outdated elections management ballot counting system.

Board of Supervisors' Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

Computer and voting systems in California have required certification by the Secretary of State since the early 1960's. Following the Presidential Election of 2000, "punchcard" voting systems were decertified in California. Numerous counties were forced to procure new voting systems, at significant cost. The DFM Mark-a-Vote voting system, which continues to be used in Sonoma, Lake and Madera counties, was grandfathered into the certification process due to its longevity in California and its proven accuracy and transparency.

It should also be noted that Sonoma County uses the Hart eSlate Disabled Access Units (DAU's) for voters with disabilities, to allow unassisted voting at the polls. Votes cast on the DAU's are printed out and duplicated on Mark-A-vote duplicate ballot cards and tallied by the BC Win vote counting system with all other ballots cast. This combination of systems is necessary for Sonoma County to be in compliance with the Help America Vote Act.

Voting and ballot counting systems are very expensive, running in the millions of dollars. In the event a new voting system were to be approved for use in California that was proven to be accurate, transparent and more cost effective than the current Mark-A-Vote system, the Board would certainly consider a recommendation from the Registrar of Voters and the County Administrator to invest in a new system, taking into consideration available funding.

R3 The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors support the legal liaison to the state legislature to promote changing the law allowing Sonoma County to require 100% vote-by-mail.

Board of Supervisors' Response: This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the 2013 Sonoma County Legislative Program.

Annually the Board of Supervisors puts forth Sonoma County's State and Federal Legislative Program identifying those legislative proposals which the Board wishes to advance. In the 2013 Program the Board will include support of legislative efforts to allow counties to voluntarily convert to all Vote by Mail elections, if the percentage of Permanent Vote by Mail voters equals or exceeds a certain percentage of the number of registered voters in a county, providing drop off locations established on election day and that return postage need not be paid by the county.

Date: 9-21-12 Signed: 