



November 16, 2021

Mr. Kris Cook
Department of Finance
915 L Street, 10th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Christina Snider
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway,
Room 355
San Diego, CA 92101

And Parties, Interested Parties, and Interested Persons (See Mailing List)

Re: Proposed Decision

Extended Conditional Voter Registration, 20-TC-02
Elections Code Section 2170 as Amended by Statutes 2019, Chapter 565 (SB 72)
County of San Diego, Claimant

Dear Mr. Cook and Ms. Snider:

The Proposed Decision for the above-captioned matter is enclosed for your review.

Hearing

This matter is set for hearing on **Friday, December 3, 2021**, at 10:00 a.m., via Zoom.

In response to COVID-19 and its impact on public meetings under the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20 temporarily suspended, on an emergency basis pursuant to California Government Code section 8571, certain requirements for public meetings until September 30, 2021. Statutes 2021, chapter 165, amended the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act to extend the suspension of these requirements until January 31, 2022. Accordingly, requiring the physical presence of board members at meetings and providing a physical space for members of the public to observe and participate have been suspended until further notice, so long as the agency makes it possible for members of the public to observe and address the meeting remotely, for example, via web or audio conferencing such as Zoom. (Gov. Code, § 11133, as added by Stats. 2021, ch. 165.)

The Commission on State Mandates (Commission) is committed to ensuring that its public meetings are accessible to the public and that the public has the opportunity to observe the meeting and to participate by providing written and verbal comment on Commission matters.

If you want to speak during the hearing, you must use the "Raise Hand" feature in order for our moderators to know you need to be unmuted. If you are participating by phone, you may dial *9 to use the "Raise Hand" feature.

There are three options for joining the meeting via Zoom:

1. Through the link below you can listen and view through your desktop, laptop, tablet, or smart phone. This will allow you to view documents being shared as well. **(You are encouraged to use this option.)**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81533666399?pwd=djIwUUnNSQ1lwU1ZXdnhFQnNTTXdYUT09>

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Passcode: 261998

2. Through one tap mobile on an iPhone in the U.S. This process will dial everything for you without having to key in the meeting ID number. If you have the Zoom application on your iPhone you can view the meeting and documents being shared as well.

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3. Through your landline (or non-smart mobile) phone, any number works. You will be able to listen to the proceedings but will not be able to view the meeting or any documents being shared.

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During this extraordinary time and as we explore new ways of doing business with new technologies, we ask that you remain patient with us. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us for help with technical problems at csminfo@csm.ca.gov or 916 323-3562.

Please notify Commission staff not later than the Wednesday prior to the hearing that you or a witness plan to testify and please specify the names and email addresses of the people who will be speaking for inclusion on the witness list so that detailed instructions regarding how to participate as a party in this meeting on Zoom can be provided to them.

If you would like to request postponement of the hearing, please refer to section 1187.9(b) of the Commission's regulations.

Special Accommodations

For any special accommodations such as a sign language interpreter, an assistive listening device, materials in an alternative format, or any other accommodations, please contact the Commission Office at least five to seven *working* days prior to the meeting.

Sincerely,



Heather Halsey
Executive Director

ITEM 3
TEST CLAIM
PROPOSED DECISION

Elections Code Section 2170 as Amended by
Statutes 2019, Chapter 565 (SB 72)
Extended Conditional Voter Registration
20-TC-02
County of San Diego, Claimant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This Test Claim filed by the County of San Diego (claimant) alleges that reimbursement is required for state-mandated activities arising from Statutes 2019, chapter 565 (SB 72). The test claim statute amended Elections Code section 2170 by expanding the locations at which county elections officials provide conditional voter registration and related provisional voting, (CVR and CVR provisional voting).

As explained below, staff finds that Elections Code section 2170, as amended by the test claim statute, does not mandate a new program or higher level of service on county elections officials and, thus, does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program under article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution.

Procedural History

The claimant filed the Test Claim on December 23, 2020.¹ The Department of Finance (Finance) filed comments on the Test Claim on April 2, 2021.² The claimant filed rebuttal comments on May 5, 2021.³ Commission staff issued the Draft Proposed Decision on September 29, 2021.⁴ The claimant filed comments on the Draft Proposed Decision on October 20, 2021.⁵ Finance did not file comments on the Draft Proposed Decision.

¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 1.

² Exhibit B, Finance's Comments on the Test Claim, filed April 2, 2021, page 1.

³ Exhibit C, Claimant's Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 1.

⁴ Exhibit D, Draft Proposed Decision, issued September 29, 2021.

⁵ Exhibit E, Claimant's Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021.

Commission Responsibilities

Under article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution, local agencies and school districts are entitled to reimbursement for the costs of state-mandated new programs or higher levels of service. In order for local government to be eligible for reimbursement, one or more similarly situated local agencies or school districts must file a test claim with the Commission. “Test claim” means the first claim filed with the Commission alleging that a particular statute or executive order imposes costs mandated by the state. Test claims function similarly to class actions and all members of the class have the opportunity to participate in the test claim process and all are bound by the final decision of the Commission for purposes of that test claim.

The Commission is the quasi-judicial body vested with exclusive authority to adjudicate disputes over the existence of state-mandated programs within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution and not apply it as an “equitable remedy to cure the perceived unfairness resulting from political decisions on funding priorities.”⁶

Claims

The following chart provides a brief summary of the claims and issues raised and staff’s recommendation.

Issue	Description	Staff Recommendation
Was the Test Claim timely filed pursuant to Government Code section 17551 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 1183.1?	Government Code section 17551(c) states: “test claims shall be filed not later than 12 months following the effective date of a statute or executive order, or within 12 months of incurring increased costs as a result of a statute or executive order, whichever is later.” Section 1183.1(c) of the Commission’s regulations defines 12 months as 365 days. ⁷	<i>Timely filed</i> – The test claim statute became effective on January 1, 2020 and the Test Claim was filed on December 23, 2020, within 12 months of the effective date of the test claim statute.
Does Elections Code section 2170, as amended by Statutes 2019, chapter 565, impose a reimbursable state-mandated program?	The test claim statute expands the locations where county elections officials are required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to polling places (defined to include vote	<i>Deny</i> – Elections Code section 2170, as amended by the test claim statute does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program under article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution on county elections officials.

⁶ *County of Sonoma v. Commission on State Mandates* (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 1264, 1281, citing *City of San Jose v. State of California* (1996) 45 Cal.App.4th 1802, 1817.

⁷ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 1183.1(c).

Issue	Description	Staff Recommendation
	<p>centers)⁸ and satellite election offices.</p> <p>“Providing” CVR and CVR provisional voting requires county elections officials to provide a voter registration affidavit pursuant to Elections Code section 2170(d)(1) and perform the activities specified in Elections Code section 2170(d)(2) through (d)(5) to process conditional voter registrations and include CVR provisional ballots in the official canvass, and requires county elections officials in non-Voter’s Choice Act counties to follow the procedures specified in Elections Code section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3) when providing a CVR voter with a provisional ballot.</p>	<p>The requirement to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at vote centers and satellite offices of the county elections official is not mandated by the state because state law does not require counties to participate in the Voter’s Choice Act and create vote centers or to create satellite offices.⁹</p> <p>The test claim statute does not impose a new program or higher level of service. Elections have always been conducted by counties, and not by the state, and thus, no costs have been shifted from the state to local government.¹⁰ Even without the test claim statute, counties are required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting <i>to all voters</i> requesting them regardless of the cost, and that has not changed. Nor does the test claim statute change <i>when</i> CVR and CVR provisional voting must be made available to voters, or require counties to create new polling places, vote centers, or satellite offices to provide these existing services. Under the test claim statute,</p>

⁸ Elections Code sections 338.5, 357.5 (which defines “vote center” as “a location established for holding elections that offers the services described in Sections 2170, 4005, and 4007 [the Voter’s Choice Act].”).

⁹ Elections Code sections 3018(b), 4005, 4007.

¹⁰ Elections Code section 13001 (Stats. 2008, ch. 179) provides that “[a]ll expenses authorized and necessarily incurred in the preparation for, and conduct of, elections as provided in this code shall be paid from the county treasuries, except that when an election is called by the governing body of a city the expenses shall be paid from the treasury of the city.”

Issue	Description	Staff Recommendation
		county elections officials are simply performing the same activities during the same time period as was required under preexisting law, except at additional, existing locations. Accordingly, the test claim statute does not require counties to perform any new or additional activities or shift financial responsibility for conducting elections from the state to the counties and, thus, does not impose a new program or higher level of service.

Staff Analysis

A. The Test Claim Was Timely Filed.

Government Code section 17551(c) requires that a test claim be filed “not later than 12 months after the effective date of the statute or executive order, or within 12 months of incurring increased costs as a result of a statute or executive order, whichever is later.” Section 1183.1(c) of the Commission’s regulations defines 12 months as 365 days.¹¹ Government Code section 17557(e) requires a test claim to be submitted by June 30 following a fiscal year in order to establish reimbursement eligibility for that fiscal year. The test claim statute became effective on January 1, 2020.¹² The Test Claim was filed on December 23, 2020, within 365 days of the test claim statute’s effective date. Accordingly, the Test Claim was timely filed.

B. Elections Code Section 2170, as Amended by the Test Claim Statute, Does Not Mandate a New Program or Higher Level of Service on Counties and, Therefore, Does Not Constitute a Reimbursable State-Mandated Program Within the Meaning of Article XIII B, Section 6 of the California Constitution.

Prior to the test claim statute, the elections official was required by state law to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at its permanent offices and at all vote centers for counties operating under the Voter’s Choice Act, during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day.¹³ In addition, prior law permitted, but did not require, counties to provide CVR and CVR

¹¹ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 1183.1(c).

¹² Statutes 2019, chapter 565.

¹³ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), (e) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2); Elections Code sections 4005(a)(2)(A)(ii), 4007 (Stats. 2016, ch. 832); California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023(b).

provisional voting at satellite offices of the county elections official during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day.¹⁴

The test claim statute amended Elections Code section 2170(d) and (e) to extend the requirement for elections officials to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to all satellite offices and polling places in the county, and polling places are defined in the Elections Code to include vote centers.¹⁵ Providing CVR and CVR provisional ballots requires county elections officials to provide a voter registration affidavit pursuant to Elections Code section 2170(d)(1) and perform the activities specified in Elections Code section 2170(d)(2) through (d)(5) to process conditional voter registration and include CVR provisional ballots in the official canvass, and requires county elections officials in non-Voter's Choice Act counties to follow the procedures specified in Elections Code section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3) when providing a CVR voter with a provisional ballot.

However, staff finds that Elections Code section 2170, as amended by the test claim statute, does not mandate a new program or higher level of service on county elections officials and, thus, does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program under article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution because:

- The requirement to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices of the county elections official is not mandated by the state because county elections officials are not required by state law to participate in the Voter's Choice Act and have vote centers, or to create satellite offices;¹⁶ and
- The test claim statute does not impose a new program or higher level of service. Elections have always been conducted by local elections officials, not the state; the cost of which is borne by the counties.¹⁷ Thus, no costs have been shifted from the state to local government. Furthermore, county elections officials have a preexisting duty to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to any voter requesting them, regardless of cost. The test claim statute simply expands the locations where these preexisting services must be provided, but does not otherwise impose any new or additional activities. Even

¹⁴ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), (e) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2); Statutes 2015, chapter 734, section 2.

¹⁵ Elections Code sections 338.5, 357.5 (which defines "vote center" as "a location established for holding elections that offers the services described in Sections 2170, 4005, and 4007 [the Voter's Choice Act].").

¹⁶ Elections Code sections 3018(b), 4005, 4007; *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (Kern High School Dist.)* (2003) 30 Cal.4th 727, 743 and 754 (agreeing with the court's analysis in *City of Merced v. State of California* (1984) 153 Cal.App.3d 777); *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (POBRA)* (2009) 170 Cal.App.4th 1355, 1368.

¹⁷ Elections Code section 13001 (Stats. 2008, ch. 179) provides that "[a]ll expenses authorized and necessarily incurred in the preparation for, and conduct of, elections as provided in this code shall be paid from the county treasuries, except that when an election is called by the governing body of a city the expenses shall be paid from the treasury of the city."

without the test claim statute, counties are required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting, and that has not changed.¹⁸ Nor does the test claim statute change when CVR and CVR provisional voting must be made available to voters, or require counties to create new polling places, vote centers, or satellite offices, or to expand the hours for providing these existing services. Under the test claim statute, county elections officials are simply performing the same activities during the same time period as required under preexisting law, except now at additional, existing locations. Thus, the activities of providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices and polling places do not constitute a new program or higher level of service.

Conclusion

Based on the forgoing analysis, staff finds that the test claim statute does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program on local agencies within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the Proposed Decision to deny this Test Claim and authorize staff to make any technical, non-substantive changes to the Proposed Decision following the hearing.

¹⁸ Elections Code sections 2170(d) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2, eff. Jan. 1, 2017), 14310.

BEFORE THE
 COMMISSION ON STATE MANDATES
 STATE OF CALIFORNIA

<p>IN RE TEST CLAIM</p> <p>Elections Code Section 2170 as Amended by Statutes 2019, Chapter 565 (SB 72)</p> <p>Filed on December 23, 2020</p> <p>County of San Diego, Claimant</p>	<p>Case No.: 20-TC-02</p> <p><i>Extended Conditional Voter Registration</i></p> <p>DECISION PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 17500 ET SEQ.; CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 2, DIVISION 2, CHAPTER 2.5, ARTICLE 7.</p> <p><i>(Adopted December 3, 2021)</i></p>
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DECISION

The Commission on State Mandates (Commission) heard and decided this Test Claim during a regularly scheduled hearing on December 3, 2021. [Witness list will be included in the adopted Decision.]

The law applicable to the Commission’s determination of a reimbursable state-mandated program is article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution, Government Code sections 17500 et seq., and related case law.

The Commission [adopted/modified] the Proposed Decision to [approve/partially approve/deny] the Test Claim by a vote of [vote will be included in the adopted Decision], as follows:

Member	Vote
Lee Adams, County Supervisor	
Natalie Kuffel, Representative of the Director of the Office of Planning and Research	
Gayle Miller, Representative of the Director of the Department of Finance, Chairperson	
Sarah Olsen, Public Member	
Yvette Stowers, Representative of the State Controller, Vice Chairperson	
Spencer Walker, Representative of the State Treasurer	

Summary of the Findings

This Test Claim filed by the County of San Diego (claimant) alleges that reimbursement is required for state-mandated activities arising from Statutes 2019, chapter 565 (SB 72), which amended Elections Code section 2170 by expanding the locations at which county elections officials provide conditional voter registration and related provisional voting (CVR and CVR provisional voting).

The Commission finds that the Test Claim was timely filed within one year of the effective date of the test claim statute.

The Commission further finds that the test claim statute does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution.

Prior to the test claim statute, the county elections official was required by state law to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to any voter requesting them at its permanent offices during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day.¹⁹ In addition, pursuant to Elections Code section 4005, all vote centers for counties that chose to operate under the Voter's Choice Act were required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting pursuant to Elections Code section 2170.²⁰ Under prior law, counties were permitted, but not required, to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices of the county elections official during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day.²¹

The test claim statute amended Elections Code section 2170(d) and (e) to extend the requirement for elections officials to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at all satellite offices and polling places in the county, and polling places are defined in the Elections Code to include vote centers.²² Providing CVR and CVR provisional ballots requires county elections officials to provide a voter registration affidavit pursuant to Elections Code section 2170(d)(1) and perform the activities specified in Elections Code section 2170(d)(2) through (d)(5) to process conditional voter registrations and include CVR provisional ballots in the official canvass, and requires county elections officials in non-Voter's Choice Act counties to follow the procedures specified in Elections Code section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3) when providing a CVR voter with a provisional ballot.

However, the Commission finds that Elections Code section 2170, as amended by the test claim statute, does not mandate a new program or higher level of service on county elections officials

¹⁹ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), (e) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2); California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023(b).

²⁰ Elections Code sections 4005(a)(2)(A)(ii), 4007 (Stats. 2016, ch. 832); Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 161 (California Secretary of State, About California's Voter's Choice Act).

²¹ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), (e) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2); Statutes 2015, chapter 734, section 2.

²² Elections Code sections 338.5, 357.5 (which defines "vote center" as "a location established for holding elections that offers the services described in Sections 2170, 4005, and 4007 [the Voter's Choice Act].").

and, thus, does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program under article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution because:

- The requirement to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at vote centers and satellite offices of the county elections official is not mandated by the state because county elections officials are not required by state law to participate in the Voter’s Choice Act and have vote centers, or to establish satellite offices;²³ and
- The test claim statute does not impose a new program or higher level of service. Elections have always been conducted by local elections officials, not the state; the cost of which is borne by the counties.²⁴ Thus, no costs have been shifted from the state to local government. Furthermore, county elections officials have a preexisting duty to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to any voter requesting them, regardless of cost. The test claim statute expands the locations where CVR and CVR voting are required to be provided by the counties to existing polling places and satellite offices, but does not expand the times for which these services are provided by the counties or require the counties to create new locations where voters have access to CVR and CVR voting. Nor does the test claim statute impose any new or additional activities on county elections officials. Even without the test claim statute, counties are required to provide and process CVRs and CVR provisional ballots, and that has not changed.²⁵ Under the test claim statute, county elections officials are simply performing the same activities during the same time period as required under preexisting law, except now at additional, existing locations. Thus, the activities of providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices and polling places do not constitute a new program or higher level of service.

Accordingly, the Commission denies this Test Claim.

COMMISSION FINDINGS

I. Chronology

01/01/2020 Effective date of Statutes 2019, chapter 565, amending Elections Code section 2170.

²³ Elections Code sections 3018(b), 4005, 4007; *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (Kern High School Dist.)* (2003) 30 Cal.4th 727, 743 and 754 (agreeing with the court’s analysis in *City of Merced v. State of California* (1984) 153 Cal.App.3d 777); *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (POBRA)* (2009) 170 Cal.App.4th 1355, 1368.

²⁴ Elections Code section 13001 (Stats. 2008, ch. 179) provides that “[a]ll expenses authorized and necessarily incurred in the preparation for, and conduct of, elections as provided in this code shall be paid from the county treasuries, except that when an election is called by the governing body of a city the expenses shall be paid from the treasury of the city.”

²⁵ Elections Code sections 2170(d) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2, eff. Jan. 1, 2017), 14310.

- 12/23/2020 The claimant, County of San Diego, filed the Test Claim.²⁶
- 04/02/2021 The Department of Finance (Finance) filed comments on the Test Claim.²⁷
- 05/05/2021 The claimant filed rebuttal comments.²⁸
- 09/29/2021 Commission staff issued the Draft Proposed Decision.²⁹
- 10/20/2021 The claimant filed comments on the Draft Proposed Decision.³⁰

II. Background

This Test Claim alleges reimbursable state-mandated activities and costs arising from Elections Code section 2170, as amended by Statutes 2019, chapter 565 (SB 72), effective January 1, 2020. Elections Code section 2170 was amended by the test claim statute to expand the locations at which county elections officials must provide conditional voter registration and provisional voting to conditional voter registrants from permanent offices of the county elections official and vote centers to also include all satellite locations of the county elections office and all polling places in the county.

A. Conditional Voter Registration

To register to vote in California, an eligible person must properly execute an affidavit of voter registration to be postmarked or received by the county elections official on or before the fifteenth day prior to an election.³¹ An affidavit of registration may also be submitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles or any other public agency designated as a voter registration agency under the federal National Voter Registration Act of 1993, provided the affidavit is submitted at least 15 days before the election.³² Affidavits of registration may be completed in paper form or online through the Secretary of State's website.³³

In 2012, the Legislature enacted Elections Code 2170 et seq., establishing conditional voter registration and related provisional voting (CVR and CVR provisional voting).³⁴ CVR gives eligible persons, who missed the traditional registration deadline, another opportunity to register or reregister to vote. Under Elections Code section 2170(a), a person who is otherwise qualified to vote, but who did not register or reregister by the 15-day registration deadline, is able to

²⁶ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020.

²⁷ Exhibit B, Finance's Comments on the Test Claim, filed April 2, 2021.

²⁸ Exhibit C, Claimant's Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021.

²⁹ Exhibit D, Draft Proposed Decision, issued September 29, 2021.

³⁰ Exhibit E, Claimant's Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021.

³¹ Elections Code section 2102(a).

³² Elections Code section 2102(a)(2).

³³ Elections Code section 2102(a).

³⁴ Statutes 2012, chapter 497 (AB 1436).

conditionally register to vote and provisionally vote during the 14 days prior to and on election day, if certain requirements are met.³⁵

“Conditional voter registration” means a properly executed affidavit of registration that is delivered by the registrant to the county elections official during the 14 days immediately preceding an election or on election day and which may be deemed effective pursuant to this article after the elections official processes the affidavit, determines the registrant’s eligibility to register, and validates the registrant’s information, as specified in subdivision (c).³⁶

While enacted in 2012, CVR and CVR provisional voting did not become operative until January 1, 2017, following the Secretary of State’s certification of a statewide voter registration database (VoteCal).³⁷

CVR and CVR provisional voting were added in order to increase voter participation by providing a mechanism for eligible voters to retain the opportunity to register to vote and to vote, despite missing the 15-day registration deadline, as was seen in other states that adopted a similar process.

Citizen participation in elections is the bedrock of our representative democracy. Yet, in California, voter participation has fallen to troubling levels. In the November 2010 general election just 44.1% of eligible voters cast a vote. Fortunately there is more that we can do to promote increased participation, thus ensuring that election results reflect the will of the people to the greatest extent possible. Currently, individuals who are eligible to vote must submit a voter affidavit at least 15 days prior to an election. Unfortunately, the registration deadline hinders voter participation. This is illustrated by the ten states that allow some form of same-day registration and voting. All but one have higher voter participation rates than California—where only 44.1% of eligible voters participated in the 2010 general election. In comparison, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota had respective rates of 50.0%, 52.1%, and 55.4% in the 2010 general election. Research also shows that same-day registration and voting lead to increased participation. North Carolina implemented same-day voter registration in 2007 and saw an 8% increase in voter turnout during the 2008 presidential election compared to the 2004 presidential election.³⁸

The statute as originally enacted required county elections officials to provide CVR and CVR voting at all permanent offices of the county elections official during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day, and permitted county elections officials to provide CVR and

³⁵ Elections Code section 2170(a).

³⁶ Elections Code section 2170(a).

³⁷ Statutes 2012, chapter 497; Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 75.

³⁸ Exhibit F(1), Assembly Committee on Elections and Redistricting, Analysis of AB 1436 (2011-2012 Reg. Sess.), as amended March 20, 2012, page 3.

CVR voting at satellite offices of the county elections office on election day only.³⁹ In 2015, Elections Code section 2170 was amended to also permit CVR and CVR voting at satellite offices of the county elections office during the 14-day period prior to election day.⁴⁰ In addition to the test claim statute, Elections Code section 2170 was separately amended in 2019 to permit an elections official to provide a nonprovisional ballot to a conditional voter registrant, if certain requirements are satisfied.⁴¹ The statute was also amended in 2020 to make non-substantive changes.⁴²

Conditional voter registrants use the same affidavit of registration to register to vote as other voters – either a paper form or online through the Secretary of State’s website.⁴³ The elections official must advise conditional voter registrants that a conditional voter registration is effective only if the registrant is determined to be eligible to register to vote and the information on the registration affidavit is verified.⁴⁴

A conditional voter registration is processed in the same manner as a “regular” registration:⁴⁵ The county elections official must determine the registrant’s eligibility and attempt to validate the registrant’s information.⁴⁶ For conditional voter registration to be deemed effective, the registrant must be found eligible to register and the information provided by the registrant on the affidavit of registration verified before or during the canvass period for the election.⁴⁷ If a voter is otherwise eligible to vote, but the information provided on the affidavit cannot be verified using a Department of Motor Vehicles or federal Social Security Administration database, the registrant is issued a unique identification number for voter registration identification purposes and the conditional voter registration is deemed effective.⁴⁸ Upon finding a conditional

³⁹ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), (e) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2).

⁴⁰ Statutes 2015, chapter 734, section 2.

⁴¹ Statutes 2019, chapter 99. As a result of this separate 2019 amendment, the language of subdivision (d)(1) was changed as follows:

(d)(1) The elections official shall provide conditional voter registration and ~~provisional~~ voting pursuant to this article at all permanent offices of the county elections official in the county.⁴¹

⁴² Statutes 2020, chapter 370.

⁴³ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20022; see Elections Code sections 2102, 2150, 2170(a).

⁴⁴ Elections Code section 2170(d)(2).

⁴⁵ Elections Code section 2171(b).

⁴⁶ Elections Code section 2170(d)(4).

⁴⁷ Elections Code section 2170(a), (c).

⁴⁸ Elections Code section 2170(c)(2); see Elections Code section 2150(a)(7)(C).

registration effective, the corresponding provisional ballot is included in the official canvass for the election.⁴⁹

B. Provisional Voting

Provisional voting has been in effect in California since 1984 and is meant to ensure that “no properly registered voter is denied their right to cast a ballot if that voter’s name is not on the polling place roster due to a clerical, processing, computer, or other error” and “that no voter votes twice, either intentionally or inadvertently, in a given election.”⁵⁰ Any voter who claims to be properly registered but whose qualifications cannot be immediately determined is entitled to cast a provisional ballot.⁵¹ Common circumstances when an elections official will require a voter to cast a provisional ballot include: when a person is voting for the first time in a federal election and cannot provide the required proof of identification;⁵² when a voter has moved within the same county but has not reregistered to vote;⁵³ a vote-by-mail voter voting in person;⁵⁴ and when a voter is not on the polling place roster for an unknown reason.⁵⁵

An elections official must advise any voter who falls into any of these categories or otherwise claims to be properly registered, but whose voter eligibility cannot be determined, of the voter’s right to cast a provisional ballot, and must provide the voter with a provisional ballot, written instructions regarding the process and procedures for casting the ballot, and a written affirmation regarding the voter’s registration and eligibility to vote.⁵⁶ The written instructions provided to a provisional voter must include the following information from Elections Code section 14310(c) and (d):

- During the official canvass, the elections official shall examine the records with respect to all provisional ballots cast. Using the procedures that apply to the comparison of signatures on vote by mail ballots pursuant to Section 3019, the elections official shall compare the signature on each provisional ballot envelope with the signature on the voter’s affidavit of registration or other signature in the voter’s registration record. If the signatures do not compare or the provisional ballot envelope is not signed, the ballot shall be rejected.

⁴⁹ Elections Code section 2170(d)(5).

⁵⁰ Exhibit F(4), California Secretary of State, Provisional Voting, <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/provisional-voting> (accessed on June 2, 2021), page 2.

⁵¹ Elections Code sections 2300, 14310.

⁵² California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 19075, 20107.

⁵³ Elections Code section 14311.

⁵⁴ Elections Code section 3016.

⁵⁵ Elections Code section 14310(a); see also Exhibit F(4), California Secretary of State, Provisional Voting, <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/provisional-voting> (accessed on June 2, 2021), page 3.

⁵⁶ Elections Code section 14310(a)(1), (a)(2).

- Provisional ballots shall not be included in any semiofficial or official canvass unless one or more of the following conditions are met: (1) the elections official establishes prior to the completion of the official canvass, from the records in his or her office, the claimant's right to vote; (2) the provisional ballot has been cast and included in the canvass pursuant to Elections Code section 2170 et seq. (with CVR and CVR provisional voting); or (3) upon order of a superior court in the county of the voter's residence.
- A voter may seek the court order regarding his or her own ballot at any time prior to completion of the official canvass.
- The provisional ballot of a voter who is otherwise entitled to vote shall not be rejected because the voter did not cast his or her ballot in the precinct to which he or she was assigned by the elections official.

If the ballot cast by the voter contains the same candidates and measures on which the voter would have been entitled to vote in his or her assigned precinct, the elections official shall count the votes for the entire ballot.

If the ballot cast by the voter contains candidates or measures on which the voter would not have been entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct, the elections official shall count only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter was entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct.

- Any voter who casts a provisional ballot may access a free access system established by the Secretary of State to discover whether the voter's provisional ballot was counted and, if not, the reason why it was not counted.⁵⁷

The voter must then execute the written affirmation in the presence of an elections official, stating that the voter is eligible to vote and is registered in the county.⁵⁸

A provisional ballot is simply a regular ballot that is sealed in an envelope that demarcates it as provisional prior to being placed in the ballot box.⁵⁹ Provisional ballot envelopes must be of a different color than the envelopes used for vote-by-mail ballots, but printed substantially similar to and completed in the same manner.⁶⁰

No provisional ballot is counted or rejected until the elections official goes through a detailed process to determine whether the ballot should be counted.⁶¹ As explained in the written information provided to the voter, provisional ballots are processed and counted in the same

⁵⁷ Elections Code section 14310(a)(2).

⁵⁸ Elections Code section 14310(a)(3).

⁵⁹ Elections Code section 14310.

⁶⁰ Elections Code section 14310(b).

⁶¹ Elections Code sections 14310, 15350, and 15100-15112; see also Exhibit F(4), California Secretary of State, Provisional Voting, <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/provisional-voting> (accessed on June 2, 2021), page 3.

manner as vote-by-mail ballots.⁶² During the official canvass period, the elections official compares the signature on the provisional ballot envelope with the signature in the voter's registration record using the procedures applicable to comparing signatures for vote-by-mail ballots.⁶³

If the signatures do not compare or the provisional ballot envelope is not signed, the ballot is rejected.⁶⁴ Provisional ballots are only included in any semiofficial or official canvass if at least one of the following is true: (1) the provisional voter's right to vote is established; (2) the provisional ballot is cast and included in the canvass under the rules governing CVR and CVR provisional voting; or (3) by order of a superior court in the voter's county of residence.⁶⁵

A provisional ballot cast by an eligible voter shall not be rejected because it is cast at a location other than the voter's assigned precinct.⁶⁶ The voter is entitled to have only the votes counted that are cast on the candidates and measures that the voter would have been entitled to vote on at the voter's assigned precinct.⁶⁷ Additionally, any voter who casts a provisional ballot is entitled to find out whether their ballot was counted and, if not, the reason why it was not counted.⁶⁸ This information is made available on the Secretary of State's "My Voter Status" page, along with the voter's participation history.⁶⁹

Provisional ballots cast by conditional voter registrants⁷⁰ are subject to the same requirements as provisional ballots generally.⁷¹ Thus, a "CVR provisional ballot" is a provisional ballot that is issued to a conditional voter registrant.⁷² The ballot envelope in which the CVR provisional ballot is placed prior to being cast in the ballot box must look visibly different from all other

⁶² Elections Code sections 14310(c)(1), 15350, 15100-15112.

⁶³ Elections Code sections 14310(c)(1). The procedures for comparing signatures for vote-by-mail ballots are specified in Elections Code section 3019.

⁶⁴ Elections Code section 14310(c)(1).

⁶⁵ Elections Code section 14310(c)(2)(A).

⁶⁶ Elections Code section 14310(c)(3).

⁶⁷ Elections Code section 14310(c)(3)(A), (c)(3)(B).

⁶⁸ Elections Code section 14310(d); California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 19093 (provisional ballots generally), 20025(f) (CVR provisional ballots).

⁶⁹ California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 19093 (provisional ballots generally), 20025(f) (CVR provisional ballots).

⁷⁰ The Secretary of State's regulations governing the conditional voter registration provisions of the Elections Code use the term "CVR voter" to mean a conditional voter registrant who requests a CVR provisional ballot. (California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20021(b).)

⁷¹ Elections Code sections 2171(c), 14310-14314.

⁷² California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20021(c).

ballot envelopes, which may include a different envelope color or placing a stamp or mark using a marking mechanism on the ballot envelope.⁷³

If a conditional voter registration is deemed effective under Elections Code section 2170, the corresponding CVR provisional ballot must be processed in accordance with sections 20025 and 20026 of the Secretary of State's regulations.⁷⁴

C. Voter's Choice Act

In 2016, the Legislature enacted the Voter's Choice Act, which authorized the counties of Calaveras, Inyo, Madera, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Shasta, Sierra, Sutter, and Tuolumne to conduct any election as an all-mailed ballot election beginning January 1, 2018, if certain conditions are satisfied, including requirements for ballot drop-off locations, vote centers, and election administration plans.⁷⁵ Beginning January 1, 2020, any county may choose to conduct an election under the Voter's Choice Act if specified requirements are met.⁷⁶ By the 2018 elections, five counties had implemented the Voter's Choice Act: Madera, Napa, Nevada, Sacramento, and San Mateo. By December 2020, 15 of 58 counties had implemented the Voter's Choice Act.⁷⁷

Under the Voter's Choice Act, counties conduct elections in which all registered voters receive a ballot by mail.⁷⁸ Voters may then choose to mail in their ballot, drop off the ballot at a secure drop-off location, or vote in person at a vote center.⁷⁹ Beginning 10 days before the election and continuing through the Friday before election day, at least one vote center is required for every

⁷³ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20024.

⁷⁴ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 19095.

⁷⁵ Statutes 2016, chapter 832 (SB 450).

⁷⁶ Elections Code sections 4005, 4007. Los Angeles County is subject to the same general requirements specified in Elections Code section 4005, with certain exceptions as specified in Elections Code section 4007.

⁷⁷ Exhibit F(5), California Secretary of State, Voter's Choice Act Participating Counties, <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voters-choice-act/vca-counties> (accessed on June 2, 2021). Voter's Choice Act counties include: Amador, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Madera, Mariposa, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Sacramento, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Tuolumne.

⁷⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 160 (California Secretary of State, About California's Voter's Choice Act).

⁷⁹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 160 (California Secretary of State, About California's Voter's Choice Act).

50,000 registered voters.⁸⁰ On election day and the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday prior, one vote center is required for every 10,000 registered voters.⁸¹

Under the Voter's Choice Act, vote centers replace traditional polling places and provide the following expanded voter services:

- Vote in-person;
- Secure ballot drop off;
- Get a replacement ballot;
- Vote using an accessible voting machine;
- Get help and voting material in multiple languages; and
- *Register to vote or update voter registration, pursuant to Elections Code section 2170.*⁸²

Thus, under the Voter's Choice Act, participating counties must offer CVR and CVR provisional voting at all vote centers pursuant to Elections Code 2170.⁸³

D. Test Claim Statute

As indicated above, before the test claim statute was enacted, Elections Code 2170 required county elections officials to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to any voter that requested them at all permanent offices of the county elections official during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day, and permitted county elections officials to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite locations of the county elections office during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day.⁸⁴ In addition, Elections Code section 4005 required vote centers to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting pursuant to section 2170.⁸⁵

The test claim statute, Statutes 2019, chapter 565 (SB 72), became effective on January 1, 2020, amending Elections Code section 2170(d) and (e) to *require* county elections officials to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at all satellite offices of the county elections official and all

⁸⁰ Elections Code section 4005(a)(4)(A); Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 161 (California Secretary of State, About California's Voter's Choice Act).

⁸¹ Elections Code section 4005(a)(3)(A); Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 161 (California Secretary of State, About California's Voter's Choice Act).

⁸² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 160-161 (California Secretary of State, About California's Voter's Choice Act); Elections Code section 4005(a)(2)(A). Emphasis added.

⁸³ Elections Code section 4005(a)(2)(A)(ii), 4007 (Stats. 2016, ch. 832); California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023(b).

⁸⁴ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), (e) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2); Statutes 2015, chapter 734, section 2.

⁸⁵ Elections Code section 4005(a)(2)(A)(ii).

polling places in the county, and to specify the procedures that county elections officials in non-Voter's Choice Act counties must follow in providing a provisional ballot to a conditional voter registrant. Elections Code section 2170 was amended as follows:

(d) The county elections official shall offer conditional voter registration and provisional voting pursuant to this article, in accordance with all of the following procedures:

(1) The elections official shall provide conditional voter registration and provisional voting pursuant to this article at all permanent and satellite offices of the county elections official and all polling places in the county.

(2) The elections official shall advise registrants that a conditional voter registration will be effective only if the registrant is determined to be eligible to register to vote for the election and the information provided by the registrant on the registration affidavit is verified pursuant to subdivision (c).

(3) The elections official shall conduct the receipt and handling of each conditional voter registration and offer and receive a corresponding provisional ballot in a manner that protects the secrecy of the ballot and allows the elections official to process the registration, determine the registrant's eligibility to register, and validate the registrant's information before counting or rejecting the corresponding provisional ballot.

(4) After receiving a conditional voter registration, the elections official shall process the registration, determine the registrant's eligibility to register, and attempt to validate the registrant's information.

(5) If a conditional registration is deemed effective, the elections official shall include the corresponding provisional ballot in the official canvass.

~~(e) The county elections official may offer~~ After receiving a conditional voter registration and provisional voting pursuant to this article at satellite offices of the county elections office, the elections official shall provide the voter a provisional ballot in accordance with the following procedures: specified in paragraphs (2) to (5), inclusive, of subdivision (d).

(1) If the elections office, satellite office, or polling place is equipped with an electronic poll book, or other means to determine the voter's precinct, the elections official shall provide the voter with a ballot for the voter's precinct if the ballot is available. The ballot may be cast by any means available at the elections office, satellite office, or polling place.

(2) If the elections official is unable to determine the voter's precinct, or a ballot for the voter's precinct is unavailable, the elections official shall provide the voter with a ballot and inform the voter that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 14310. The ballot may be cast by any means available at the elections office, satellite office, or polling place.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (2), if the elections official is able to determine the voter's precinct, but a ballot for the voter's precinct is unavailable, the elections official may inform the voter of the location of the voter's polling place. A voter described in this paragraph shall not be required to vote at the voter's polling place and may instead, at the voter's choosing, cast a ballot pursuant to paragraph (2).

(4) This subdivision does not apply to elections conducted pursuant to Section 4005 or 4007 [under the Voter's Choice Act].⁸⁶

1. Secretary of State's Interpretation of the Test Claim Statute.

The Secretary of State is the chief elections officer of the state and is responsible for administering the provisions of the Elections Code.⁸⁷ According to a Secretary of State memorandum issued to county elections officials statewide, the test claim statute "amends Elections Code section 2170 to require county elections officials to offer CVR and CVR provisional voting at all permanent and satellite offices and all polling places in the county."⁸⁸

The Secretary of State's guidance for providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at all permanent and satellite county elections offices is as follows:

- Provide the individual a voter registration application.
- Once the voter completes the application, the county elections official determines the CVR voter's precinct.
- Provide the CVR voter a ballot for the voter's precinct.
- Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.⁸⁹

The Secretary of State's guidance for providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at polling locations tracks Elections Code section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3), which address the various circumstances that may arise at polling places depending on whether the polling place has technology to determine the CVR voter's precinct and whether the ballot for the CVR voter's assigned precinct is available.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Statutes 2019, chapter 565.

⁸⁷ Government Code section 12172.5(a).

⁸⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 107 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019). The courts will give weight and appropriate deference to the interpretation of a statute by the agency charged with its implementation. (*Yamaha Corp. of America v. State Bd. of Equalization* (1998) 19 Cal.4th 1, 7.)

⁸⁹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 108 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019).

⁹⁰ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 110-111 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019).

If the polling location has technology to determine the CVR voter's precinct and:

Ballot for that precinct is available:

- Provide the individual a voter registration application.
- Once the voter completes the application, the county elections official determines the CVR voter's precinct.
 - The Secretary of State recommends having a minimum of two workers at the polling place who have credentials to access the technology that can determine a CVR voter's precinct in order to ensure adequate coverage.
- Provide the CVR voter a ballot for the voter's precinct.
 - The Secretary of State recommends having a minimum of two workers at the polling place who have access to the ballots for all the precincts in the county to ensure adequate coverage.
 - If access to all precinct ballots within the county is through the use of an electronic ballot marking device, poll workers should be made aware that a voter might refuse to use that voting option. If so, the CVR voter should be:
 - informed of the location of their correct polling place where the ballot for their precinct is available, or
 - given a ballot that is available at the precinct with information that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted.
- Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.

Ballot for that precinct is NOT available:

- Inform the voter of the location of their correct polling place and their option to vote at the correct polling place or at their current location.
- If the individual does not wish to go to their polling place, provide the individual a voter registration application.
 - Once the voter completes the application, the county elections official determines the CVR voter's precinct.
 - The Secretary of State recommends having a minimum of two workers at the polling place who have credentials to access the technology that can determine a CVR voter's precinct.
 - Give the CVR voter:
 - a ballot that is available at the precinct, and

- inform the voter that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted.

- Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.

If polling location does NOT have technology to determine the CVR voter's precinct -OR- the ballot for the voter's precinct is NOT available:

- If possible, inform the individual of the location of their correct polling place where the ballot for their precinct is available, and their option to vote at the correct polling place or at their current location.
- If the individual does not wish to go to their polling place (or if the polling location does not have the technology to determine the CVR's precinct), provide the individual a voter registration application.
 - Give the CVR voter:
 - a ballot that is available at the precinct, and
 - information that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted.
 - Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.⁹¹

2. Legislative History of the Test Claim Statute.

According to the legislative history, the purpose of the test claim statute was “to expand access to same day voter registration and voting” by “requir[ing] all counties to permit eligible voters to register and vote on Election Day at every polling site.”⁹²

Additionally, the legislative history indicates that because voters who wish to change their political party preference in order to vote in a particular party’s presidential primary may do so either prior to the registration deadline or through the conditional voter registration process, providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at more locations may reduce some of the related voter confusion and frustration that reportedly occurred in California during the 2016 presidential primary election.⁹³

⁹¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 110-111 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019), emphasis in original.

⁹² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 134-135 (Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments, Analysis of SB 72 (2019-2020 Reg. Sess.), as amended March 25, 2019, pages 7-8).

⁹³ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 133 (Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments, Analysis of SB 72 (2019-2020 Reg. Sess.), as amended March 25, 2019, page 6).

E. Past Commission Decisions on Elections Law

The Commission has not received a prior test claim on Elections Code 2170, but has heard and decided a number of test claims on elections law, the following of which are relevant to this Test Claim.

Voter Identification Procedures, 03-TC-23

On October 4, 2006, the Commission approved the *Voter Identification Procedures, 03-TC-23* Test Claim, finding that Elections Code section 14310(c)(1), as amended by Statutes 2000, chapter 260, imposed a reimbursable state-mandated program on city and county elections officials to compare the signature on each provisional ballot envelope with the signature on the voter's affidavit of registration, and to reject any ballot when the signatures do not compare, for statutorily required elections.

Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration, 01-TC-15

On October 31, 2006, the Commission partially approved the *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration, 01-TC-15* Test Claim.⁹⁴ At issue were changes to the voter registration deadline prior to an election. The test claim statute amended, repealed, and reenacted several Elections Code sections to allow new registrations or changes to voter registrations through the 15th day prior to an election. Under prior law, the registration period closed 29 days before an election. The claimant sought mandate reimbursement for costs incurred to register voters during the 28-day through 15-day period prior to an election, including implementation, planning, revising training programs, conducting an informational medial campaign, answering questions about the new law, and hiring additional staff.

In finding that most of the statutory amendments by Statutes 2000, chapter 899, did not impose a new program or higher level of service on county elections officials with the meaning of article XIII B, section 6, the Commission determined that processing and accepting voter registration affidavits and changes of address were not newly required activities because county elections officials had been required to perform those activities since long before the enactment of the test claim statute.⁹⁵ Therefore, because processing and accepting new voter registrations and changes of address constitute an existing program, increases in the cost of that program that result from the changed timeframes do not impose a state-mandated program or higher level of service within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6.⁹⁶

Vote by Mail Ballots: Prepaid Postage, 19-TC-01

On July 24, 2020, the Commission partially approved the *Vote by Mail Ballots: Prepaid Postage, 19-TC-01* Test Claim, finding that Elections Code Section 3010, as amended by Statutes 2018, chapter 120, imposes a reimbursable state-mandated program on city and county

⁹⁴ Exhibit F(6), Excerpt from Commission on State Mandates, Statement of Decision for *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration, 01-TC-15*, page 1.

⁹⁵ Exhibit F(6), Excerpt from Commission on State Mandates, Statement of Decision for *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration, 01-TC-15*, pages 1-2.

⁹⁶ Exhibit F(6), Excerpt from Commission on State Mandates, Statement of Decision for *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration, 01-TC-15*, pages 1-2.

elections officials to provide prepaid postage on identification envelopes delivered with vote-by-mail ballots for all state and local elections, except for those held at the discretion of the local governing body, or elections for which counties or cities have fee authority within the meaning of Government Code section 17556(d).⁹⁷

III. Positions of the Parties

A. County of San Diego

The claimant alleges that the test claim statute imposes a reimbursable state-mandated program on counties under article XIII B, section 6 and Government Code section 17514, by requiring county elections officials to offer conditional voter registration (CVR) at satellite offices of the county elections official and polling places in the county during the 14-day period prior to the election and on election day.⁹⁸ The claimant interprets the mandate as applying to all elections conducted by the county elections official only in counties that have *not* implemented the Voter's Choice Act (Elections Code section 4005 et seq.).⁹⁹

These requirements are new because under prior law, CVR and CVR provisional voting was only required at the county elections office during the 14-day period prior to the election and on election day, was optional at satellite offices, and was neither optional nor required at polling places.¹⁰⁰ The claimant states that because polling places in San Diego County are only open on election day, the claimant must now offer CVR and CVR provisional voting at all satellite offices of the county elections official during the 14-day period prior to the election, and at all satellite offices and polling places on election day.¹⁰¹

The claimant argues that the test claim statute constitutes a new program or higher level of service.¹⁰² The new requirements under Elections Code section 2170(d)(1) carry out “the governmental function of providing services to the public – i.e., allowing voters to register to vote for the first time or re-register to vote just before (or on) election day so that they can vote in that election.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, the new requirements are unique to local government: only the county elections official is required to provide conditional voter registration.¹⁰⁴ Alternatively, the claimant argues, the test claim statute imposes a “higher level of service” on

⁹⁷ Exhibit F(7), Excerpt from Commission on State Mandates, Decision for *Vote by Mail Ballots: Prepaid Postage*, 19-TC-01, adopted July 24, 2020, pages 1-5.

⁹⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 10.

⁹⁹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 11.

¹⁰⁰ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 11.

¹⁰¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 12. The claimant notes that the “November 2020 election was unusual because polling places were open for 4 days total due to changes in the election due to the COVID-19 pandemic” and “therefore CVR had to be offered at polling places on all four of those days.”

¹⁰² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 12.

¹⁰³ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 13.

¹⁰⁴ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 13.

local governments because in addition to offering CVR and CVR provisional voting at the permanent office of the county elections official, counties must extend CVR and CVR provisional voting to satellite offices and polling places.¹⁰⁵

The claimant states that its Registrar of Voters implemented CVR during the June 2018 gubernatorial primary election, when voter turnout was only 39.8 percent.¹⁰⁶ CVR was first widely utilized by voters in the county during the November 2018 gubernatorial general election, when voter turnout reached 66.42 percent.¹⁰⁷ 2,353 individuals utilized CVR during the November 2018 election, with 1,555 individuals (66 percent) using CVR on election day.¹⁰⁸

The claimant alleges that as a result of the test claim statute, it incurred increased costs during the 2019-2020 fiscal year as follows:¹⁰⁹

Activity	Date(s) Performed	Description	Total Cost	Fee Authority	Reimbursable Cost Claimed
1) Staffing costs	FY 2019-2020	Plan, prepare and design envelopes	\$29,019	N/A	\$29,019
2) Staffing costs	FY 2019-2020	Conduct additional data entry and process CVR ballots	\$123,965	\$27,648	\$96,317
3) Training	FY 2019-2020	Create new training materials for poll workers and train poll workers	\$32,166	\$7,174	\$24,992
4) Election staffing	FY 2019-2020	Recruit and hire temporary staff and poll workers	\$96,608	\$21,546	\$75,062
5) Ballot processing	FY 2019-2020	Additional CVR ballot processing	\$10,773	\$2,403	\$8,370
6) Supplies	FY 2019-2020	CVR envelopes for satellite offices and polling places	\$91,476	\$20,402	\$71,074
7) Satellite locations	FY 2019-2020	Open and operate four new satellite locations	\$236,287	\$52,698	\$183,589
TOTAL			\$620,294	\$131,871	\$488,423

¹⁰⁵ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 14.

¹⁰⁶ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 14.

¹⁰⁷ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 14.

¹⁰⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 14.

¹⁰⁹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 5-7.

The claimant alleges that the activities listed above were performed as part of the March 2020 presidential primary election.¹¹⁰ The claimant asserts that because of the large CVR voter turnout during the November 2018 election, there was concern that polling places would be overwhelmed during the March 2020 election.¹¹¹ As of February 2019, there were over 480,000 eligible electors in San Diego County who could potentially register to vote through the CVR process, not including voters reregistering to vote through CVR.¹¹² The claimant asserts that an added complication during the March 2020 election was that it was required to make a total of 40 different variations of ballots available, which, when coupled with the requirements under the test claim statute, “made the March 2020 election administratively complex.”¹¹³

While the claimant concedes that the test claim statute did not directly require it to open additional satellite offices for the March 2020 election, the claimant argues that it was necessary to create four satellite offices so that traditional polling places would not be overwhelmed by large numbers of CVR voters, and potential voters would not have to endure long wait times.¹¹⁴ These satellite offices were open February 29, 2020 through March 2, 2020 (Saturday through Monday before election day), and on March 3, 2020 (election day).¹¹⁵ The claimant reports that 13,452 individuals used CVR during the March 2020 election.¹¹⁶

Offering CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices during the 14-day period before election day and at satellite offices and polling places on elections day required the claimant, through its Registrar of Voters, to incur planning and preparation costs to “design and develop the necessary envelopes and training and create the necessary workflows” and to hire additional temporary staff to complete data entry and to process the additional CVRs and CVR provisional ballots.¹¹⁷ The claimant also alleges that because of the test claim statute, the Registrar of Voters must train poll workers on the new processes for CVR and CVR provisional voting and update the poll worker training handbook to reflect these new processes.¹¹⁸ Because of the anticipated increased voter turnout generated by CVR and CVR provisional voting, the claimant states that it was forced to recruit and hire additional temporary staff and poll workers.¹¹⁹

Because the test claim statute directly resulted in an increased number of CVR provisional ballots, the claimant alleges that it was required to process and sort CVR provisional ballot

¹¹⁰ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 16-22.

¹¹¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 15.

¹¹² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 14.

¹¹³ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 15.

¹¹⁴ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 15-16, 21-22; Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 6.

¹¹⁵ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 16.

¹¹⁶ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 16.

¹¹⁷ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 17.

¹¹⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 17-18.

¹¹⁹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 18.

envelopes using automated processing equipment, for which it incurred additional costs.¹²⁰ The claimant also argues that the test claim statute directly resulted in the need to purchase new CVR provisional ballot envelopes for satellite locations and polling places.¹²¹ According to the claimant, the new CVR provisional ballot envelope served as the affidavit of registration for CVR voters at all locations.¹²²

The claimant cites to the Commission’s recent Decision in *Vote by Mail Ballots: Prepaid Postage*, 19-TC-01, for the proposition that it can recover some of the costs of administering elections from the jurisdictions whose elections are consolidated with the primary and general elections.¹²³ However, the claimant maintains that it cannot recover the additional internal planning and preparation costs it is forced to incur as a result of the test claim statute.¹²⁴

The claimant states that for the November 2020 election, it incurred \$191,154 in total additional costs, but anticipates receiving reimbursement from other jurisdictions for additional staffing and training costs, such that the estimated total additional costs after reimbursement are \$123,800.¹²⁵ The claimant may also receive federal Help America Vote Act funds to defray some of these costs.¹²⁶ The claimant notes that there were large-scale changes to the conduct of elections during the November 2020 elections as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but that they did not affect the counties’ obligations under the test claim statute.¹²⁷ The claimant conducted the November 2020 elections using the “consolidated polling place” method, wherein in-person voting was offered for 29 days at one location (the permanent county elections office) and at 235 consolidated polling places for 4 days.¹²⁸ The claimant did not use satellite offices during the November 2020 election.¹²⁹

The claimant anticipates incurring \$30,177 in additional costs to conduct a special primary election in April 2021 to fill a vacancy in Assembly District 79.¹³⁰ Because this special election is not consolidated with other local elections, the claimant cannot receive reimbursement to

¹²⁰ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 19.

¹²¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 19-20.

¹²² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 20.

¹²³ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 17.

¹²⁴ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 17.

¹²⁵ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 24.

¹²⁶ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 24.

¹²⁷ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 22-23.

¹²⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 23.

¹²⁹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 23.

¹³⁰ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 24-25; Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 7.

offset costs.¹³¹ The claimant will not use satellite offices for the April 2021 election and anticipates having 51 polling places open on election day.¹³²

The claimant estimates the statewide cost of implementing the test claim statute for fiscal year 2020-2021 at \$331,154 – 722,934.¹³³

In rebuttal comments, the claimant asserts that Finance concedes that the test claim statute creates an unfunded mandate and that training and supply costs were necessarily incurred.¹³⁴ The claimant disputes Finance’s challenge to the following four categories of costs: (1) Registrar of Voters staffing; (2) election staffing; (3) CVR ballot processing; and (4) creation of new satellite locations.¹³⁵ The claimant argues that while the Commission first determines in a test claim decision whether a statute imposes reimbursable state-mandated activities, and then, at the parameters and guidelines phase, separately determines whether certain costs are “reasonably necessary” to carry out the mandate, these inquiries overlap and intertwine and should therefore be considered in tandem.¹³⁶

The claimant argues that because the test claim statute required for the first time that poll workers offer CVR at polling places, the Registrar of Voters was required to incur additional staffing costs to plan new workflows and develop new CVR envelopes.¹³⁷ Thus, these planning activities were not only reasonably necessary, but were required.¹³⁸ Similarly, the expected increase in CVR voters caused the Registrar to hire additional election workers.¹³⁹ Because the legislative history of the test claim statute expressly anticipated an increase in voter turnout, increased staffing costs were required as a result of the test claim statute.¹⁴⁰ The claimant maintains that using automated equipment to sort CVR ballots was a required labor cost, and not discretionary as Finance alleges.¹⁴¹ The claimant was required to use automated equipment to reduce labor costs for CVR ballot processing.¹⁴² While the claimant concedes that the test claim statute does not directly require satellite offices, satellite offices were necessary “to mitigate long

¹³¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 25.

¹³² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 24.

¹³³ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 26.

¹³⁴ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 1.

¹³⁵ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, pages 1-2.

¹³⁶ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 3.

¹³⁷ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, pages 4-5.

¹³⁸ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, pages 4-5.

¹³⁹ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 5.

¹⁴⁰ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 5.

¹⁴¹ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 5.

¹⁴² Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, pages 5-6.

lines and wait times at the polling places,” a reasonably anticipated result of expanding CVR services to all polling places.¹⁴³

In comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, the claimant frames the requirements imposed by the test claim statute as an expansion of the existing CVR program.¹⁴⁴ The claimant challenges what it describes as the conclusion of the Draft Proposed Decision that “because elections officials were already required to conduct the ‘actual activities’ of providing CVR services prior to SB 72, the fact that elections officials now have to do so in new locations for longer periods of time is not a new program or higher level of service” but rather solely an increase in the cost of providing the same services that were required under prior law.¹⁴⁵

The claimant argues that case law demonstrates that a “statute imposes a new program or higher level of service when it requires counties to offer ‘expanded’ services.”¹⁴⁶ In contrast, the claimant argues, a statute imposes increased costs alone when there is no government program or specific public service provided.¹⁴⁷ To support this point, the claimant distinguishes the test claim statute from the statutes at issue in *City of Richmond v. Commission on State Mandates* (1998) 64 Cal.App.4th 1190, 1196, *City of Anaheim v. State* (1987) 189 Cal.App.3d 1478, and *County of Los Angeles v. State of California* (1987) 43 Cal.3d 46, arguing that those cases “involved mandates that (1) applied to the private and public sector alike and only incidentally impacted local government, or (2) had the effect of governments paying additional compensation to their government employees” and “did *not* require that governments provide expanded services to the public.”¹⁴⁸ Conversely, the claimant asserts:

SB 72 [the test claim statute] expressly requires local governments to provide additional services to the public. That was expressly not true in the cases above. *City of Anaheim*, 189 Cal. App. 3d at 1484; *County of Los Angeles*, 43 Cal. 3d at 58 (“Workers’ compensation is not a program administered by local agencies to provide service to the public”); *City of Richmond*, 64 Cal. App. 4th at 1196 (paying employees more benefits is not a “peculiarly local government function”);

¹⁴³ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 6.

¹⁴⁴ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 1.

¹⁴⁵ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 1.

¹⁴⁶ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 4.

¹⁴⁷ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 2.

¹⁴⁸ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 2, emphasis in original.

“[a] higher cost to the local government for compensating its employees is not the same as a higher cost of providing services to the public.”¹⁴⁹

The claimant asserts that, “in contrast to merely imposing a ‘higher costs,’ [sic] when a statute requires that local government must provide an ‘expanded’ version of a service it is already providing to the public (as is true here), this is a reimbursable mandate.”¹⁵⁰ To highlight the distinction between “higher costs” and “higher level of service,” the claimant cites to *Carmel Valley Fire Protection Dist. v. State of California* (1987) 190 Cal.App.3d 521 (requirement to update fire safety equipment to firefighters was a “new program”), *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 877-879 (new duties constitute a “higher level of service” because they impose an “increase in the actual level or quality of services provided”), and *Department of Finance. v. Commission State Mandates* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 546 (despite county already providing stormwater drainage and flood control services, new requirements imposed a “higher level of service” because they reduced pollution and increased compliance and a “new program” because they provided a government service that was not previously mandated).¹⁵¹

The claimant argues the county elections officials’ “expanded” duties under the test claim statute constitute a “higher level of service” because they are new in comparison to the prior level of service and were intended to provide an enhanced service to the public.¹⁵² To support this position, the claimant cites to the test claim statute’s legislative history, which the claimant alleges shows that the test claim statute was intended to expand voter services and voting, a traditional governmental function and service.¹⁵³

Additionally, the claimant argues that “by expanding the dates and locations on which these [CVR] services must be offered,” the test claim statute increased the “actual level or quality” of counties’ preexisting CVR duties, which “constitutes a ‘new program’ because the requirements to offer CVR in polling places and at satellite locations during the 14-day period prior to the election and on election day were new and provided a uniquely governmental service.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 3.

¹⁵⁰ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 4.

¹⁵¹ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, pages 4-5.

¹⁵² Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 5.

¹⁵³ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 6.

¹⁵⁴ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 5.

B. Department of Finance

Finance does not dispute the claimant’s position that as a result of the test claim statute, claimant’s county elections official was required to update its training handbook, train poll workers on the CVR process, and purchase new CVR envelopes for both polling and satellite locations.¹⁵⁵ However, Finance challenges the claimant’s assertion that it was required to incur staffing, equipment, and satellite office expenses, arguing that those activities are not required by the amended statute.¹⁵⁶ Specifically, Finance asserts that the test claim statute does not require the claimant to recruit and hire additional temporary staff and poll workers, use automated processing equipment to process and sort ballots, or create additional satellite offices, and therefore, the claimant exercised discretion in choosing to perform these activities.¹⁵⁷ As such, costs relating to the non-required activities of staffing, ballot processing equipment, and satellite offices are not reimbursable.¹⁵⁸ Finance did not file comments on the Draft Proposed Decision.

IV. Discussion

Article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution provides in relevant part the following:

Whenever the Legislature or any state agency mandates a new program or higher level of service on any local government, the state shall provide a subvention of funds to reimburse such local government for the costs of such programs or increased level of service...

The purpose of article XIII B, section 6 is to “preclude the state from shifting financial responsibility for carrying out governmental functions to local agencies, which are ‘ill equipped’ to assume increased financial responsibilities because of the taxing and spending limitations that articles XIII A and XIII B impose.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, the subvention requirement of section 6 is “directed to state-mandated increases in the services provided by [local government] ...”¹⁶⁰

Reimbursement under article XIII B, section 6 is required when the following elements are met:

- A state statute or executive order requires or “mandates” local agencies or school districts to perform an activity.¹⁶¹
- The mandated activity constitutes a “program” that either:
 - a. Carries out the governmental function of providing a service to the public; or

¹⁵⁵ Exhibit B, Finance’s Comments on the Test Claim, filed April 2, 2021, page 1.

¹⁵⁶ Exhibit B, Finance’s Comments on the Test Claim, filed April 2, 2021, page 2.

¹⁵⁷ Exhibit B, Finance’s Comments on the Test Claim, filed April 2, 2021, page 2.

¹⁵⁸ Exhibit B, Finance’s Comments on the Test Claim, filed April 2, 2021, page 2.

¹⁵⁹ *County of San Diego v. State of California* (1997) 15 Cal.4th 68, 81.

¹⁶⁰ *County of Los Angeles v. State of California* (1987) 43 Cal.3d 46, 56.

¹⁶¹ *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 874.

- b. Imposes unique requirements on local agencies or school districts and does not apply generally to all residents and entities in the state.¹⁶²
- The mandated activity is new when compared with the legal requirements in effect immediately before the enactment of the test claim statute or executive order and it increases the level of service provided to the public.¹⁶³
- The mandated activity results in the local agency or school district incurring increased costs, within the meaning of section 17514. Increased costs, however, are not reimbursable if an exception identified in Government Code section 17556 applies to the activity.¹⁶⁴

The Commission is vested with the exclusive authority to adjudicate disputes over the existence of state-mandated programs within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution.¹⁶⁵ The determination whether a statute or executive order imposes a reimbursable state-mandated program is a question of law.¹⁶⁶ In making its decisions, the Commission must strictly construe article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution, and not apply it as an “equitable remedy to cure the perceived unfairness resulting from political decisions on funding priorities.”¹⁶⁷

A. The Test Claim Was Timely Filed.

Government Code section 17551(c) requires that a test claim be filed “not later than 12 months after the effective date of the statute or executive order, or within 12 months of incurring increased costs as a result of a statute or executive order, whichever is later.” Section 1183.1(c) of the Commission’s regulations defines 12 months as 365 days.¹⁶⁸ Government Code section 17557(e) requires a test claim to be submitted by June 30 following a fiscal year in order to establish reimbursement eligibility for that fiscal year.

¹⁶² *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 874-875 (reaffirming the test set out in *County of Los Angeles v. State of California* (1987) 43 Cal.3d 46, 56).

¹⁶³ *San Diego Unified School Dist.* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 874-875, 878; *Lucia Mar Unified School District v. Honig* (1988) 44 Cal3d 830, 835.

¹⁶⁴ *County of Fresno v. State of California* (1991) 53 Cal.3d 482, 487; *County of Sonoma v. Commission on State Mandates* (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 1265, 1284; Government Code sections 17514 and 17556.

¹⁶⁵ *Kinlaw v. State of California* (1991) 53 Cal.3d 482, 487.

¹⁶⁶ *County of San Diego v. State of California* (1997) 15 Cal.4th 68, 109.

¹⁶⁷ *County of Sonoma v. Commission on State Mandates* (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 1265, 1280 (citing *City of San Jose v. State of California* (1996) 45 Cal.App.4th 1802, 1817).

¹⁶⁸ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 1183.1(c).

The test claim statute became effective on January 1, 2020.¹⁶⁹ The Test Claim was filed on December 23, 2020, within 365 days of the test claim statute's effective date. Accordingly, the Test Claim was timely filed.

B. Elections Code Section 2170, as Amended by the Test Claim Statute, Does Not Mandate a New Program or Higher Level of Service on Counties and, Therefore, Does Not Constitute a Reimbursable State-Mandated Program Within the Meaning of Article XIII B, Section 6 of the California Constitution.

The Commission finds that Elections Code section 2170, as amended by the test claim statute (Stats. 2019, ch. 565), does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program on county elections officials. County elections officials have a preexisting duty to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting. The test claim statute simply expands the locations where these preexisting services must be provided to include satellite offices and polling places (defined to include vote centers), but does not otherwise change the actual activities that must be performed by a county elections official when offering CVR and CVR provisional voting. Thus, there are no new required activities. In addition, providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at vote centers and satellite offices is not mandated by the state because the decision to have a vote center or satellite office is a local discretionary decision.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the activities of providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at the new locations do not mandate a new program or higher level of service.

1. The Test Claim Statute Requires County Elections Officials to Provide Conditional Voter Registration and Provisional Voting at More Locations (Satellite Election Offices and Polling Places) and Identifies the Required Activities to Provide These Services.

Prior to the test claim statute, the county elections official was required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at its permanent offices during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day.¹⁷¹ In addition, pursuant to Elections Code section 4005, all vote centers for counties that chose to operate under the Voter's Choice Act were required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting pursuant to Elections Code section 2170.¹⁷² Under prior law, counties were permitted to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices of the county elections official during the 14-day period prior to election day and on election day, but were not required to do so.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Statutes 2019, chapter 565.

¹⁷⁰ Elections Code sections 3018(b), 4005, 4007.

¹⁷¹ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), (e) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2); California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023(b).

¹⁷² Elections Code section 4005(a)(2)(A), 4007 (Stats. 2016, ch. 832); Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 161 (California Secretary of State, About California's Voter's Choice Act).

¹⁷³ Elections Code section 2170(e) (Stats. 2015, ch. 734, § 2).

- a. The test claim statute expands the locations where CVR and CVR voting are required to be provided by the counties to existing polling places (defined to include vote centers) and satellite offices, but does not expand the times for which these services are provided by the counties or require the counties to create new locations where voters have access to CVR and CVR voting.

The test claim statute amended Elections Code section 2170(d) and (e) to extend the requirement for county elections officials to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to all satellite offices of the county elections official and all polling places in the county, as follows in underline and strikeout:

(a) “Conditional voter registration” means a properly executed affidavit of registration that is delivered by the registrant to the county elections official during the 14 days immediately preceding an election or on election day and which may be deemed effective pursuant to this article after the elections official processes the affidavit, determines the registrant's eligibility to register, and validates the registrant's information, as specified in subdivision (c).

(b) In addition to other methods of voter registration provided by this code, an elector who is otherwise qualified to register to vote under this code and Section 2 of Article II of the California Constitution may complete a conditional voter registration and cast a provisional ballot, or nonprovisional ballot under subdivision (f), during the 14 days immediately preceding an election or on election day pursuant to this article.

(c)(1) A conditional voter registration shall be deemed effective if the county elections official is able to determine before or during the canvass period for the election that the registrant is eligible to register to vote and that the information provided by the registrant on the registration affidavit matches information contained in a database maintained by the Department of Motor Vehicles or the federal Social Security Administration.

(2) If the information provided by the registrant on the registration affidavit cannot be verified pursuant to paragraph (1) but the registrant is otherwise eligible to vote, the registrant shall be issued a unique identification number pursuant to Section 2150 and the conditional voter registration shall be deemed effective.

(d) The county elections official shall offer conditional voter registration and provisional voting pursuant to this article, in accordance with all of the following procedures:

(1) The elections official shall provide conditional voter registration and provisional voting pursuant to this article at all permanent and satellite offices of the county elections official and all polling places in the county.

(2) The elections official shall advise registrants that a conditional voter registration will be effective only if the registrant is determined to be eligible to register to vote for the election and the information provided by the registrant on the registration affidavit is verified pursuant to subdivision (c).

(3) The elections official shall conduct the receipt and handling of each conditional voter registration and offer and receive a corresponding

provisional ballot in a manner that protects the secrecy of the ballot and allows the elections official to process the registration, determine the registrant's eligibility to register, and validate the registrant's information before counting or rejecting the corresponding provisional ballot.

(4) After receiving a conditional voter registration, the elections official shall process the registration, determine the registrant's eligibility to register, and attempt to validate the registrant's information.

(5) If a conditional registration is deemed effective, the elections official shall include the corresponding provisional ballot in the official canvass.

~~(e) The county elections official may offer~~ After receiving a conditional voter registration and provisional voting pursuant to this article at satellite offices of the county elections office, the elections official shall provide the voter a provisional ballot in accordance with the following procedures: specified in paragraphs (2) to (5), inclusive, of subdivision (d).

(1) If the elections office, satellite office, or polling place is equipped with an electronic poll book, or other means to determine the voter's precinct, the elections official shall provide the voter with a ballot for the voter's precinct if the ballot is available. The ballot may be cast by any means available at the elections office, satellite office, or polling place.

(2) If the elections official is unable to determine the voter's precinct, or a ballot for the voter's precinct is unavailable, the elections official shall provide the voter with a ballot and inform the voter that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 14310. The ballot may be cast by any means available at the elections office, satellite office, or polling place.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (2), if the elections official is able to determine the voter's precinct, but a ballot for the voter's precinct is unavailable, the elections official may inform the voter of the location of the voter's polling place. A voter described in this paragraph shall not be required to vote at the voter's polling place and may instead, at the voter's choosing, cast a ballot pursuant to paragraph (2).

(4) This subdivision does not apply to elections conducted pursuant to Section 4005 or 4007 [under the Voter's Choice Act].¹⁷⁴

Polling places are typically open on election day, and not during the 14 days prior to the election.¹⁷⁵ However, the Elections Code broadly defines "polling place" as "a location where a

¹⁷⁴ Statutes 2019, chapter 565.

¹⁷⁵ Elections Code section 14212 provides: "The polls shall be open at 7 a.m. of the day of any election, and shall be kept open until 8 p.m. of the same day, when the polls shall be closed, except as provided in Sections 4005, 4007, and 14401." Elections Code section 14401 provides that "if at the hour of closing there are any other voters in the polling place, or in line at the door,

voter casts a ballot, including a vote center.”¹⁷⁶ “Vote center” is defined as “a location established for holding elections that offers the services described in Sections 2170, 4005, and 4007.”¹⁷⁷ As indicated above, sections 4005 and 4007 address the Voter’s Choice Act, where counties that choose to participate in the Voter’s Choice Act conduct elections using vote centers that are open before election day and on election day, and are required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting pursuant to section 2170.¹⁷⁸ Thus, Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), as amended by the test claim statute, requires counties to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at all polling places (defined to include vote centers), and at all satellite offices, beginning January 1, 2020.

The claimant also contends the test claim statute requires counties to provide CVR “at expanded times.”¹⁷⁹ However, the plain language of the test claim statute does not change the time periods during which CVR and CVR provisional voting are offered by a county (14 days prior to election day and on election day at all permanent election offices), or require counties to create new polling places, vote centers, or satellite offices. In addition, according to the Secretary of State’s memorandum issued to county elections officials statewide, the test claim statute requires polling places to offer CVR on election day only.¹⁸⁰ Thus, there is no requirement under the test claim statute that polling places provide CVR during the 14 days prior to election day.¹⁸¹ The

who are qualified to vote and have not been able to do so since appearing, the polls shall be kept open a sufficient time to enable them to vote.”

¹⁷⁶ Elections Code section 338.5.

¹⁷⁷ Elections Code section 357.5.

¹⁷⁸ Elections Code sections 4005 and 4007. Section 4005 provides that counties participating in the Voter’s Choice Act must allow voters residing in the county to “[r]egister to vote, update the voter’s voter registration, and vote pursuant to Section 2170 [CVR and CVR provisional voting].” (Elec. Code, § 4005(a)(2)(A)(ii) (Stats. 2016, ch. 832).) See also, Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 160-161 (California Secretary of State, About California’s Voter’s Choice Act).

¹⁷⁹ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 6.

¹⁸⁰ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 108-109 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019) (“During this time period [E-14 through E-1], CVR must be offered at all permanent and satellite county elections offices and all vote centers.”...“In addition to CVR being offered at all permanent and satellite county elections offices and all vote centers, CVR must be offered at all polling locations on Election Day.”).

¹⁸¹ Statutes 2021, chapter 34, added sections 1600 to 1606 to the Elections Code beginning June 28, 2021, for elections conducted in non-Voter’s Choice Act counties prior to January 1, 2022. (Elec. Code, § 1600.) For these elections, counties may choose to consolidate polling locations to be open from the Saturday prior to the day of the election through the Monday prior to the day of the election and on election day. (Elec. Code, § 1602(b).) The Test Claim states: “The November 2020 election was unusual because polling places were open for 4 days total due to changes in the election due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as discussed below,

Secretary of State’s memorandum further provides that vote centers and satellite offices are required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting “during” the 14-day period before election day and on election day.¹⁸² However, pursuant to the Voter’s Choice Act, counties that choose to operate vote centers are only required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting services *ten* days before election day and on election day (a time “during” the 14-day period identified in section 2170).¹⁸³ The test claim statute did not expand the time for vote centers to provide these services. Similarly, counties that have satellite offices are required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting “during” the 14-day period before election day, on the days that those locations are open, and on election day. The claimant concedes that it provided those services for just four days before election day and on election day for the March 2020 election as follows:

[T]he County created four satellite offices for the March 2020 election. These locations were open from February 29, 2020 through March 2, 2020 from 8:00

and therefore CVR had to be offered at polling places on all four of those days.” (Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 12.) Elections Code sections 1600-1606, as added by Statutes 2021, chapter 34 have not been pled in a test claim.

¹⁸² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 108-109 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019) (“During this time period [E-14 through E-1], CVR must be offered at all permanent and satellite county elections offices and all vote centers”).

¹⁸³ Elections Code section 4005(a)(2)(A), 4007 (Stats. 2016, ch. 832). Elections Code section 4005(a)(2)(A)(ii) provides that the county elections official at a vote center is required to permit a voter residing in the county to “register to vote, update his or her voter registration, and vote pursuant to Section 2170.” Section 4005, however, only requires counties operating under the Voter’s Choice Act to have one vote center for every 50,000 registered voters open ten days before election day and have one vote center for every 10,000 registered voters open on election day. (Elec. Code, § 4005(a)(3)(A) and (4)(A).)

Under the rules of statutory construction, the statute that is more specific to the subject matter (the Voter’s Choice Act) controls over the more general provisions of conditional voter registration in section 2170, and thus, vote centers under the Voter’s Choice Act are required to provide CVR and CVR voting ten days before election day and on election day. (*Arbuckle-College City Fire Protection Dist. v. County of Colusa* (2003) 105 Cal.App.4th 1155, 1166 (“It is a general rule of statutory interpretation that, in the event of statutory conflict, a specific provision will control over a general provision. . . . Generally, it can be presumed that when the Legislature has enacted a specific statute to deal with a particular matter, it would intend the specific statute to control over more general provisions of law that might otherwise apply.”).) This interpretation is consistent with the interpretation of the Secretary of State’s Office. (Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 161 (California Secretary of State, About California’s Voter’s Choice Act).)

a.m. through 5:00 p.m., and on March 3, 2020 from 7:00 a.m. through 8:00 p.m.¹⁸⁴

Thus, the test claim statute only expands the locations where CVR and CVR voting are required to be provided by the counties to existing satellite offices and polling places, but does not expand the times for which these services are provided by the counties or require the counties to create new locations where voters have access to CVR and CVR voting.

b. Elections Code section 2170(d) and (e) identify the activities required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting.

Elections Code section 2170(d) and (e) identify the procedures for providing CVR and CVR provisional ballots at all existing satellite offices and polling places. The plain language of section 2170(d) states that it is “the county elections official” that shall offer CVR and CVR provisional voting under the procedures set forth in subparts (d)(1) through (d)(5). However, subdivision(d)(1), which contains the specific requirement that CVR and CVR provisional voting be provided at satellite offices and polling places, uses the more general term “elections official,” as do the other four subparts of subdivision (d). Subdivision (e) also uses “elections official” when describing the process for providing the CVR provisional ballot to a voter that conditionally registered.

The Elections Code broadly defines “elections official” as “any of the following: (a) A clerk or any person who is charged with the duty of conducting an election. (b) A county clerk, city clerk, registrar of voters, or elections supervisor having jurisdiction over elections within any county, city, or district within the state.”¹⁸⁵ However, under the Elections Code, county elections officials are the only local elections officials authorized to receive and process affidavits of registration.¹⁸⁶

This limitation as applied to CVR is reflected in the language of Elections Code section 2170(a), which first uses the specific term “*county* elections official” to refer to whom a conditional voter registration must be returned and then uses the more general term “elections official” to refer back to the county elections official. Given that subdivision (d) similarly uses *county* elections official to specify “who shall offer conditional voter registration and provisional voting pursuant to this article,” the use of the more general “elections official” in subdivisions (d)(1) and (e) also refers back to the *county* elections official.¹⁸⁷ This interpretation is consistent with guidance from the Secretary of State, which expressly states that the test claim statute applies to county elections officials only.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, the requirements under subdivisions (d)(1) and (e) to

¹⁸⁴ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 33 (Declaration of L. Michael Vu, Registrar of Voters for the County of San Diego from December 2012 to January 7, 2021).

¹⁸⁵ Elections Code section 320.

¹⁸⁶ Elections Code section 2102.

¹⁸⁷ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1), emphasis added.

¹⁸⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 107 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019).

provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at all satellite offices and polling places in the county applies to county elections officials only.

While the plain language of Elections Code section 2170(d)(1) makes clear that county elections officials must now “provide” CVR and CVR provisional voting at all existing satellite offices of the county elections official and at all existing polling places in the county, further interpretation is required to determine what activities a county elections official is required to perform when “providing” CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices and polling places.

- i. *Providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices and polling places requires county elections officials to provide a voter registration affidavit pursuant to Elections Code section 2170(d)(1).*

Elections Code section 2170(d)(1) states that that the elections official must provide “conditional voter registration.” Subdivision (a) defines a “conditional voter registration” as “a properly executed affidavit of registration that is delivered by the registrant to the county elections official during the 14 days immediately preceding an election or on election day.”¹⁸⁹ The Secretary of State’s existing regulations specify that conditional voter registrants “shall use the same affidavit of registration as other voters—either a paper form or online through the Internet Web site of the Secretary of State.”¹⁹⁰

Therefore, because a “conditional voter registration” means a properly executed affidavit of registration that is delivered by the CVR registrant to the county elections official during the 14-day period before an election or on election day, providing “conditional voter registration” at all satellite offices and polling places must include providing an affidavit of registration. This interpretation is supported by the Secretary of State’s guidance to county elections officials, which states that in providing CVR, county elections officials must “[p]rovide the individual a voter registration application.”¹⁹¹

- ii. *Providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at existing satellite offices and polling places and processing the registrations and ballots requires county elections officials to perform the activities specified in Elections Code section 2170(d)(2) through (d)(5).*

There are specific activities that county elections officials are required to perform as part of offering CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite offices and polling places. When providing a CVR and CVR provisional ballot at a satellite office or polling place, county elections officials are required to: advise CVR registrants regarding the requirements for a CVR to be deemed effective (section 2170(d)(2)); conduct the receipt and handling of the conditional voter registration (section 2170(d)(3)); and offer and receive a corresponding provisional ballot (section 2170(d)(3)).¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Elections Code section 2170(a).

¹⁹⁰ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20022 (Register 2018, No. 10).

¹⁹¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 109-111 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019).

¹⁹² Elections Code section 2170(d)(2) through (d)(3).

Elections Code section 2170(d)(4) and (d)(5) then requires the county elections official to:

- process the CVR registration, determine the CVR registrant's eligibility to register, and validate the registrant's information before counting or rejecting the CVR voter's ballot (Elections Code section 2170(d)(4)); and
- if the CVR is deemed effective, include the CVR voter's ballot in the official canvass. (Elections Code section 2170(d)(5).
 - iii. *County elections officials in non-Voter's Choice Act counties are required to follow the procedures specified in Elections Code section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3) when providing the CVR voter with a provisional ballot.*

The plain language of Elections Code section 2170(e), as amended by Statutes 2019, chapter 565 (the test claim statute), specifies the manner in which county elections officials must provide a CVR voter with a provisional ballot after receiving a conditional voter registration.

After receiving a conditional voter registration, an elections official must provide the CVR voter with a provisional ballot in the following manner:

- (1) If the permanent or satellite office of the county elections official is equipped with an electronic poll book or other means to determine the CVR voter's precinct, the elections official must provide the voter with a ballot for the voter's precinct, if available.¹⁹³
- (2) If the elections official is unable to determine the CVR voter's precinct, or a ballot for the voter's precinct is unavailable, the elections official must provide the voter with a ballot and inform the voter that pursuant to Elections Code section 14310(c)(3), only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted.¹⁹⁴
- (3) Notwithstanding paragraph (2), if the elections official is able to determine the voter's precinct, but a ballot for the voter's precinct is unavailable, the elections official may inform the voter of the location of the voter's polling place.¹⁹⁵

Subdivision (e)(4) specifies that the procedures in subdivision (e) do *not* apply to elections conducted under the Voter's Choice Act.¹⁹⁶

Prior law required county elections officials at satellite offices to have the means to determine a CVR voter's precinct and access to all of the precinct ballots in the county, but not at polling

¹⁹³ Elections Code section 2170(e)(1).

¹⁹⁴ Elections Code section 2170(e)(2).

¹⁹⁵ Elections Code section 2170(e)(3).

¹⁹⁶ Elections Code section 2170(e)(4).

places, unless the county elections official specifically designated a polling place as a satellite county elections office.¹⁹⁷ This is still the case under the test claim statute.

The legislative history indicates that the procedures outlined in subdivision (e) are intended to address the various situations that may uniquely arise when county elections officials provide CVR provisional voting at polling places.

While this bill requires CVR to be available at every polling place, it does not mandate that each CVR location be able to provide the correct ballot for every voter. Instead, this bill anticipates and provides for situations in which a CVR location is unable to provide the correct ballot for a voter.¹⁹⁸

The distinction between the activities county elections officials must perform when providing CVR provisional voting at satellite county elections offices versus at polling places is readily apparent from the Secretary of State's guidance to county elections officials regarding the changes in law following the test claim statute. According to the Secretary of State, providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at satellite county elections offices requires county elections officials to perform the following activities:

- Provide the individual a voter registration application.
- Once the voter completes the application, the county elections official determines the CVR voter's precinct.
- Provide the CVR voter a ballot for the voter's precinct.
- Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.¹⁹⁹

In comparison, the Secretary of State's guidance for the activities to be performed by county elections officials when providing CVR and CVR provisional voting at polling places depends on whether the polling place has the means to determine the CVR voter's precinct and whether the ballot for the CVR voter's assigned precinct is available.²⁰⁰ If the polling place has the means to determine the CVR voter's precinct and the ballot for that precinct is available, the Secretary of State advises that the county elections official must adhere to the following process:

- Provide the individual a voter registration application.
- Once the CVR voter completes the application, determine the voter's precinct.

¹⁹⁷ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023.

¹⁹⁸ Exhibit F(2), Assembly Committee on Elections and Redistricting, Analysis of SB 72 (2019-2020 Reg. Sess.), as amended May 17, 2019, page 5.

¹⁹⁹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 108 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019). These procedures also apply to vote centers under the Voter's Choice Act. Pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023, vote centers are also required to have the means to determine a CVR voter's precinct and access to all of the precinct ballots in the county.

²⁰⁰ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 110-111 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019).

- Provide the voter a ballot for the voter's precinct.
- Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.²⁰¹

If the polling place has the means to determine the CVR voter's precinct, but the ballot for that precinct is not available, then the county elections official is required to:

- Inform the voter of the location of their correct polling place and their option to vote at the correct polling place or at their current location.
- If the individual does not wish to go to their polling place, provide the individual a voter registration application.
 - Once the CVR voter completes the application, determine the voter's precinct.
 - Give the voter:
 - a ballot that is available at the precinct, and
 - inform the voter that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted.
 - Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.²⁰²

Finally, if the polling place does not have the means to determine the CVR voter's precinct, or the ballot for the voter's precinct is not available:

- If possible, inform the individual of the location of their correct polling place where the ballot for their precinct is available, and their option to vote at the correct polling place or at their current location.
- If the individual does not wish to go to their polling place or if the polling place does not have the means to determine the individual's precinct, provide a voter registration application.
 - Give the voter:
 - a ballot that is available at the precinct, and
 - information that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted.
 - Voter places the voted ballot in a CVR provisional ballot envelope.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 110 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019).

²⁰² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 110-111 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019).

²⁰³ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 110-111 (California Secretary of State CC/ROV Memorandum #19125, November 20, 2019), emphasis in original.

The Secretary of State guidance tracks the requirements under Elections Code section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3) and is consistent with the plain language of the statute.

Therefore, county elections officials in non-Voter's Choice Act counties are required to follow the procedures specified in Elections Code section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3) when providing the CVR voter with a provisional ballot at satellite election offices and polling places.

2. The Requirement to Provide CVR and CVR Provisional Voting at Vote Centers and Satellite Offices of the County Elections Official Is Not Mandated by the State Because County Elections Officials Are Not Required by State Law to Create Vote Centers and Satellite Offices.

The test claim statute requires that all county polling places, defined to include vote centers, and satellite offices provide CVR and CVR provisional voting. The claimant has not participated in the Voter's Choice Act and has not created vote centers.²⁰⁴ However, the claimant seeks reimbursement for the cost of creating four satellite county elections offices for the March 2020 election.²⁰⁵ The claimant concedes that while the test claim statute does not directly require a county elections official to establish satellite locations, it was necessary to do so "to mitigate long lines and wait times at the polling places, when such long lines and wait times were a reasonably-anticipated result" of the test claim statute.²⁰⁶

Based on the analysis below, the requirement to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at vote centers and satellite offices stems from an *initial discretionary decision* by the county elections official to participate in the Voter's Choice Act and establish vote centers, and establish satellite offices, and therefore, the requirements are not mandated by the state for county vote centers and satellite election offices.

As discussed above, sections 4005 and 4007 address the Voter's Choice Act, which authorizes counties to conduct any election as an all-mailed ballot election, provided certain conditions are met.²⁰⁷ Elections Code section 4005 states in relevant part:

Notwithstanding Section 4000 or any other law, on or after January 1, 2018, the Counties of Calaveras, Inyo, Madera, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Sacramento, San

²⁰⁴ At the time the Test Claim was filed, the claimant did not participate in the Voter's Choice Act. On October 19, 2021, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors directed the Registrar of Voters to transition to the Voter's Choice Act model beginning with the June 2022 gubernatorial primary election cycle. (Exhibit F(8), Excerpt from County of San Diego Board of Supervisors, Statement of Proceedings for October 19, 2021 Regular Meeting, <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/bos/agenda/sop/10192021sop.pdf> (accessed on November 2, 2021), pages 2-4.)

²⁰⁵ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 15-16.

²⁰⁶ Exhibit C, Claimant's Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 6. See also Exhibit E, Claimant's Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, pages 6-7.

²⁰⁷ Elections Code sections 4005, 4007 (Stats. 2016, ch. 832). Los Angeles County is subject to the same general requirements specified in Elections Code section 4005, with certain exceptions as specified in Elections Code section 4007.

Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Shasta, Sierra, Sutter, and Tuolumne, and, except as provided in Section 4007, on or after January 1, 2020, any county *may* conduct any election as an all-mailed ballot election if all of the following apply...²⁰⁸

Elections Code section 4007, which applies exclusively to Los Angeles County, states in pertinent part as follows:

On or after January 1, 2020, the County of Los Angeles *may* conduct any election as a vote center election if all of the following apply:

(1) The county elections official complies with all the provisions of subdivision (a) of Section 4005 that are not inconsistent with this section.²⁰⁹

Amongst the provisions enumerated in Elections Code section 4005(a) is the requirement that the county elections officials conduct elections using vote centers, that are open before election day and on election day, and which must provide voters with a number of voter services, including the opportunity to “[r]egister to vote, update the voter’s voter registration, and vote pursuant to Section 2170 [CVR and CVR provisional voting].”²¹⁰

(2) The county elections official permits a voter residing in the county to do any of the following at a *vote center*:

(i) Return, or vote and return, the voter’s vote by mail ballot.

(ii) *Register to vote, update the voter’s voter registration, and vote pursuant to Section 2170.*

(iii) Receive and vote a provisional ballot pursuant to Section 3016 or Article 5 (commencing with Section 14310) of Chapter 3 of Division 14.

(iv) Receive a replacement ballot upon verification that a ballot for the same election has not been received from the voter by the county elections official. If the county elections official is unable to determine if a ballot for the same election has been received from the voter, the county elections official may issue a provisional ballot.

²⁰⁸ Elections Code section 4005(a) (Stats. 2016, ch. 832), emphasis added.

²⁰⁹ Elections Code section 4007(a)(1) (Stats. 2016, ch. 832), emphasis added.

²¹⁰ Elections Code sections 4005 and 4007 address Voter Choice Act counties, where counties agree to open one vote center per 50,000 registered voters ten days before the election and continuing through the Friday before election day, and one voter center per 10,000 registered voters beginning the Saturday before the election and continuing through election day. (Elec. Code, § 4005(a)(3)(A), (a)(4)(A)); Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 160-161 (California Secretary of State, About California’s Voter’s Choice Act).

(v) Vote a regular, provisional, or replacement ballot using accessible voting equipment that provides for a private and independent voting experience.²¹¹

Thus, while counties that conduct elections under the Voter's Choice Act are required to have vote centers under the plain language of section 4005 and 4007, participation is optional ("any county *may* conduct any election as an all-mailed ballot election if all of the following apply...").²¹² Elections Code section 354 states that "'Shall' is mandatory and 'may' is permissive." Therefore, counties are permitted, but not required, to have vote centers.

Government Code section 12172.5(d) authorizes the Secretary of State to adopt regulations "to assure the uniform application and administration of state election laws."²¹³ Section 20021 of the Secretary of State's regulations, which provides definitions pertaining to conditional voter registration, defines "satellite office" as follows:

(d) "Satellite office" has the same meaning as "satellite location," as used in subdivision (b) of Elections Code section 3018.²¹⁴

Elections Code section 3018, which governs the procedures for vote by mail applications and voting, states in pertinent part: "(b) For purposes of this section, the office of an elections official *may* include satellite locations."²¹⁵ Therefore, a county elections official is permitted, but not required, to have satellite offices.

In *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (Kern High School Dist.)*, the California Supreme Court held "that the proper focus under a legal compulsion inquiry is upon the nature of claimants' participation in the underlying programs themselves."²¹⁶ The court left open the possibility that where no "legal" compulsion exists, "practical" compulsion may be found if the local agency faces "certain and severe...penalties" such as "double...taxation" or other "draconian" consequences if they fail to comply with the statute.²¹⁷

In *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (POBRA)*, the court emphasized that practical compulsion requires a *concrete* showing in the record that a failure to engage in the activities at issue will result in certain and severe penalties or other draconian consequences,

²¹¹ Elections Code section 4005(a)(2)(A) (Stats. 2016, ch. 832), emphasis added.

²¹² Elections Code section 4005(a) (Stats. 2016, ch. 832), emphasis added; Elections Code section 4007(a) (Stats. 2016, ch. 832) ("the County of Los Angeles may conduct any election as a vote center election if all of the following apply...").

²¹³ Government Code section 12172.5(d).

²¹⁴ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20021.

²¹⁵ Elections Code section 3018(b), emphasis added.

²¹⁶ *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (Kern High School Dist.)* (2003) 30 Cal.4th 727, 743 (agreeing with the court's analysis in *City of Merced v. State of California* (1984) 153 Cal.App.3d 777).

²¹⁷ *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (Kern High School Dist.)* (2003) 30 Cal.4th 727, 754.

such that the local government entity must comply in order to perform its core essential functions.²¹⁸ In *Department of Finance (POBRA)*, the court addressed legislation that provided procedural protections to peace officers employed by counties, cities, and school districts, when the officer is subject to investigation or discipline.²¹⁹ Because school districts are authorized, but not required, to hire peace officers, the court held that school districts were not legally compelled to comply with the legislation.²²⁰ In dismissing the argument that local government entities must employ peace officers when necessary to carry out their basic functions, the court said “it is not manifest on the face of the statute cited nor is there any showing in the record that [a school district] hiring its own peace officers, rather than relying upon the county or city in which it is embedded, is the only way as a practical matter to comply.”²²¹ Thus, the court found that school districts were not mandated by the state to comply with the test claim statute.

Here, a county elections official has no legal compulsion to establish vote centers or satellite election offices, but has the discretion to do so. Thus, the requirements imposed by the test claim statute, which are triggered by that discretionary decision, are not legally compelled by state law.

Furthermore, there is no evidence in the record to support a finding that county elections officials are practically compelled to have vote centers or satellite election offices; that they will face certain or severe penalties or other draconian consequences if they fail to establish vote centers or satellite election offices to carry out their core functions. The declaration of L. Michael Vu, who was the Registrar of Voters for the claimant from December 2012 to January 7, 2021, states that “it was necessary during the March 2020 election for the County to create satellite offices of the Registrar’s permanent office at which potential voters could register through CVR” as follows:

7. Section 2170 of the Elections Code, which first required elections officials to offer CVR, was enacted in 2012 but not effective until the Secretary of State certified the VoteCal Statewide Voter Registration Database in 2016. Therefore, the County of San Diego first implemented CVR during the June 2018 gubernatorial primary election.

8. The voter turnout for the June 2018 election was 39.8%. Attached as Exhibit 1 is a true and correct copy of a report of Registered Voters and Vote by Mail Ballot Voter Turnout maintained by our office and publicly available at https://www.sdvote.com/content/dam/rov/en/reports/voter_turnouts.pdf

9. The first election in which CVR was widely utilized by potential voters in the County was the November 6, 2018 gubernatorial general election. At that

²¹⁸ *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (POBRA)* (2009) 170 Cal.App.4th 1355, 1367.

²¹⁹ *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (POBRA)* (2009) 170 Cal.App.4th 1355.

²²⁰ *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (POBRA)* (2009) 170 Cal.App.4th 1355, 1368.

²²¹ *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates (POBRA)* (2009) 170 Cal.App.4th 1355, 1367.

election, the County offered CVR at the Registrar's permanent office (located at 5600 Overland Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123). The County did not implement satellite offices.

10. During the November 6, 2018 election, there was a 66.42% voter turnout. (See Exhibit 1.) During that election, 2,353 individuals exercised CVR. Of this number, 1,555 individuals did so on election day. On election day, a line wrapped around the Registrar's building equal to the length of over 5 football fields. Although the polls closed at 8:00 p.m., the last potential voter who had been standing in line since the polls closed entered the building at around midnight. This potential voter registered by CVR. The last voter left the building at approximately 1:00 a.m. on November 7, 2018.

11. Attached as Exhibit 2 is a true and correct copy of the California Secretary of State's Report of Registration as of February 10, 2019, which is publicly available at <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ror/ror-odd-year-2019/county.pdf>. According to this document, as of February 2019, there were 2,229,766 individuals eligible to vote in the County of San Diego and only 1,747,383 registered voters. That meant there were 482,383 individuals who had not registered to vote but could potentially opt to do so by CVR. This was in addition to voters who needed to or would choose to re-register to vote by CVR.

12. After SB 72's amendment to Section 2170(d)(1), which mandated that county elections officials offer CVR at any satellite offices of the elections official during the 14-day period prior to the election, and offer CVR at both satellite offices and polling places on election day, there was a very real possibility that polling places would be overwhelmed with the same long lines and wait times experienced at the Registrar's permanent location in November 2018. Further, the March 2020 election was a presidential primary, and in 2016 the primary had significant voter turnout of 50.94%. (See Exhibit 1.)

13. Additionally, for the March 2020 primary election, the Registrar's office was required to make available at satellite offices and polling places a variety of ballot styles pursuant to California law. (Cal. Elec. Code § 13102.) The Registrar's office was required to make available at the polls eight different styles of ballots (for eight variations: American Independent, Democratic, Green, Libertarian, No Party Preference, No Party Preference requesting to vote in the Democratic primary, Peace & Freedom, and Republican) in five different languages (English, Spanish, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Chinese, pursuant to Voting Rights Act requirements), for a total of 40 variations of ballots. This requirement made the March 2020 election administratively complex. That complexity was compounded by SB 72's amendment to Section 2170(d)(1), which mandated that county elections officials offer CVR at any satellite offices of the elections official during the 14-day period prior to the election, and offer CVR at both satellite offices and polling places on election day. The Registrar's office anticipated this complexity would be particularly acute for poll workers who would actually be interacting with voters on election day.

14. In my then-capacity as Registrar, I collaborated with staff at the Registrar's office and determined that because of SB 72's amendment to Section 2170(d)(1), it was necessary during the March 2020 election for the County to create satellite offices of the Registrar's permanent office at which potential voters could register through CVR. This was necessary to avoid even longer line and wait times than voters experienced in the November 2018 election, and it was necessary to keep that traffic away from the traditional polling places.

15. Therefore, the County created four satellite offices for the March 2020 election. These locations were open from February 29, 2020 through March 2, 2020 from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m., and on March 3, 2020 from 7:00 a.m. through 8:00 p.m. Additionally, there were 1,548 polling places at the March 2020 election.²²²

The Registrar's statements do not evidence that the claimant will face certain or severe penalties or other draconian consequences if it fails to establish satellite election offices to carry out its core elections functions. Mr. Vu cites to several factors as contributing to the "necessity" of establishing four satellite offices for the November 2020 election. He states that due to the high voter turnout during the November 2018 election, satellite offices were needed "to avoid even longer line and wait times," and "to keep that traffic away from traditional polling places" because "there was a very real possibility that polling places would be overwhelmed."²²³ Because the March 2020 election was a presidential primary, Mr. Vu believed that voter turnout would be high.²²⁴ He also cites to eligible voter statistics from February 2019 showing that nearly half a million residents of San Diego County were eligible but not registered to vote, whom he characterizes as potential CVR voters, in addition to any registered voters who need to re-register by CVR.²²⁵ Finally, Mr. Vu "anticipated" that the administrative complexity caused by the convergence of the test claim statute and a separate requirement to provide 40 variations of ballots would be particularly challenging for poll workers at polling places.²²⁶

None of the facts alleged by Mr. Vu provide concrete evidence that any actual severe penalty or consequence would ensue if the claimant did not establish satellite offices. Instead, Mr. Vu's statements about the necessity of four satellite offices during the March 2020 election are based on hypothetical outcomes that the claimant seeks to prevent, without supporting evidence to show that such outcomes are certain or even likely ("*avoid* longer line and wait times," "*real possibility* that polling places would be overwhelmed," "482,383 individuals...*could potentially* opt to do so by CVR").²²⁷

²²² Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 30-33.

²²³ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 32-33.

²²⁴ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 32.

²²⁵ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 31-32.

²²⁶ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 32.

²²⁷ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 31-33, emphasis added.

Furthermore, long lines and wait times and inundated polling places do not prevent the claimant from conducting elections. While the declaration puts forth facts showing that during the November 2018 election, there was “a line wrapped around the Registrar’s building equal to the length of over 5 football fields” and the last potential voter, who registered by CVR, did not leave the building until around 1:00 a.m., even if these circumstances were to occur in later elections, they do not establish that but for satellite offices, the claimant would be unable to comply with the test claim statute or carry out its other core elections functions. There is no evidence that the high voter turnout on election day November 2018 caused voters to be unable to register to vote or vote, or prevented the county elections official from performing any of its core elections functions. The evidence provided by the claimant does not show that establishing new satellite offices is the only way as a practical matter to comply with the test claim statute.

Therefore, the requirement to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at vote centers and satellite offices of the county elections official is not mandated by the state.

3. Although Counties Are Now Required to Perform CVR and CVR Provisional Voting Activities at Existing Satellite Offices and Polling Places, the Test Claim Statute Does Not Require Counties to Perform Any New or Additional Activities or Shift Financial Responsibility for Conducting Elections From the State to the Counties and, Thus, the Test Claim Statute Does Not Impose a New Program or Higher Level of Service.

Courts have repeatedly held that local government entities are not entitled to reimbursement simply because a state law or order increases the costs of providing mandated services.²²⁸ Rather, reimbursement under article XIII B, section 6 requires that all elements be met, including that the increased costs result from a new program or higher level of service mandated by the state on the local agency.²²⁹ To determine whether a test claim statute imposes a new program or higher level of service, the required activities imposed by the state must be new *and* impose a program subject to article XIII B, section 6 (by carrying out the governmental function of providing a service to the public, or imposing unique requirements on the local agency).²³⁰ Alternatively, a new program or higher level of service can occur if the state transfers to local agencies complete or partial financial responsibility for a required program for which the state previously had complete or partial financial responsibility.²³¹

The primary issue in this case is whether the test claim statute imposes any new or additional activities or duties on counties, or shifts new costs from the state to local government. To determine if a mandated activity or shift in costs from the state is new, the courts have used the

²²⁸ *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal. 4th 859, 877; *City of Richmond v. Commission on State Mandates* (1998) 64 Cal.App.4th 1190, 1196; *Lucia Mar Unified School Dist. v. Honig* (1988) 44 Cal.3d 830, 835.

²²⁹ *Lucia Mar Unified School Dist. v. Honig* (1988) 44 Cal.3d 830, 835.

²³⁰ *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 874-875 (reaffirming the test set out in *County of Los Angeles v. State of California* (1987) 43 Cal.3d 46, 56).

²³¹ California Constitution, article XIII B, section 6(c).

ordinary meaning of the word “new” and have found that if local government was not required to perform the activity or incur the cost shifted from the state at the time the test claim statute or regulation became effective (which, in effect, requires a comparison of the law immediately before the effective date of the test claim statute or regulation), the mandated activity or shifted cost is new.

For example, in *Lucia Mar Unified School Dist.*, the 1981 test claim statute required local school districts to pay the cost of educating pupils in state schools for the severely handicapped – costs that the state had previously paid in full until the 1981 statute became effective.²³² The court held that the requirement imposed on local school districts to fund the cost of educating these pupils was new “since at the time [the test claim statute] became effective they were not required to contribute to the education of students from their districts at such schools.”²³³ The same analysis was applied in *County of San Diego*, where the court found that the state took full responsibility to fund the medical care of medically indigent adults in 1979, which lasted until the 1982 test claim statute shifted the costs back to counties.²³⁴ In *City of San Jose*, the court addressed the 1990 test claim statute, which authorized counties to charge cities for the costs of booking into county jails persons who had been arrested by employees of the cities.²³⁵ The court denied the city’s claim for reimbursement, finding that the costs were not shifted by the state since “at the time [the 1990 test claim statute] was enacted, and indeed long before that statute, the financial and administrative responsibility associated with the operation of county jails and detention of prisoners was borne entirely by the county.”²³⁶ In *San Diego Unified School District*, the court determined that the required activities imposed by 1993 test claim statutes, which addressed the suspension and expulsion of K-12 students from school, were “new in comparison with the preexisting scheme in view of the circumstances that they did not exist prior to the enactment of [the 1993 test claim statutes].”²³⁷ And in *Department of Finance. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 546, the court found that installing and maintaining trash receptacles at transit stops and performing certain inspections were both *new duties* that local governments were required to perform, when compared to prior law.²³⁸

The purpose of article XIII B, section 6 is to prevent the state from forcing extra programs on local government each year in a manner that negates their careful budgeting of increased expenditures that are counted against the local government’s annual spending limit.²³⁹ Thus,

²³² *Lucia Mar Unified School Dist. v. Honig* (1988) 44 Cal.3d 830, 832.

²³³ *Lucia Mar Unified School Dist. v. Honig* (1988) 44 Cal.3d 830, 835, emphasis added.

²³⁴ *County of San Diego v. State of California* (1997) 15 Cal.4th 68, 91.

²³⁵ *City of San Jose v. State* (1996) 45 Cal.App.4th 1802.

²³⁶ *City of San Jose v. State* (1996) 45 Cal.App.4th 1802, 1812, emphasis added.

²³⁷ *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 878 (see also page 869, footnotes 6 and 7, and page 870, footnote 9, where the court describes in detail the state of the law immediately before the enactment of the 1993 test claim statutes).

²³⁸ *Department of Finance. v. Commission State Mandates* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 546, 558.

²³⁹ California Constitution, articles XIII B, sections 1, 8(a) and (b); *County of Los Angeles v. State of California* (1987) 43 Cal.3d 46, 56; *Lucia Mar Unified School Dist. v. Honig* (1988) 44

article XIII B, section 6 requires a comparison of the law as it existed immediately before the effective date of the test claim statute or regulation to determine if the state has mandated local government to perform new or additional activities and incur new costs shifted from the state that require reimbursement.

As explained below, the test claim statute here does not require counties to perform any new or additional activities or shift financial responsibility for conducting elections from the state to the counties and, thus, does not impose a new program or higher level of service.

- a. The test claim statute does not require counties to perform any new or additional activities or shift financial responsibility for conducting elections from the state to the counties.

Here, the test claim statute requires that CVR and CVR provisional voting *also* be provided at existing satellite offices and polling places. However, the actual government services provided by county elections officials – providing CVR and CVR provisional voting to any voter – are not new and have not changed as a result of the test claim statute, nor have the activities that county elections officials must carry out in order to provide these services. County elections officials perform the same activities they performed under preexisting law during the same time period, except at more existing locations. Expanding the locations where the same government services are provided does not, without requiring counties to perform new activities, amount to an increase in the level or quality of those services. Nor has the test claim statute transferred financial responsibility from the state to local government. Elections have always been conducted by local government, and not by the state.²⁴⁰ Thus, the test claim statute does not constitute a new program or higher level of service.

As explained in the Background, the Legislature enacted Elections Code 2170 et seq. in 2012, establishing CVR and CVR provisional voting.²⁴¹ Under Elections Code section 2170(a), a person who is otherwise qualified to vote, but who did not register or reregister by the 15-day registration deadline, is able to conditionally register to vote and provisionally vote during the 14 days prior to and on election day, if certain requirements were met.²⁴² While enacted in 2012, CVR and CVR provisional voting did not become operative until January 1, 2017, following the Secretary of State’s certification of a statewide voter registration database (VoteCal).²⁴³

Elections Code section 2170 as originally enacted required county elections officials to provide CVR and CVR voting at all permanent offices of the county elections official during the 14-day

Cal.3d 830, 835; *Hayes v. Commission on State Mandates* (1992) 11 Cal.App.4th 1564, 1595; *County of Sonoma v. Commission on State Mandates* (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 1264, 1283.

²⁴⁰ Elections Code section 13001 (Stats. 2008, ch. 179) provides that “[a]ll expenses authorized and necessarily incurred in the preparation for, and conduct of, elections as provided in this code shall be paid from the county treasuries, except that when an election is called by the governing body of a city the expenses shall be paid from the treasury of the city.”

²⁴¹ Statutes 2012, chapter 497.

²⁴² Elections Code section 2170(a) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497.)

²⁴³ Statutes 2012, chapter 497; Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, page 75.

period prior to election day and on election day.²⁴⁴ Conditional voter registrants use the same affidavit of registration to register to vote as other voters – either a paper form or online through the Secretary of State’s website.²⁴⁵ The elections official was required to advise conditional voter registrants that a conditional voter registration is effective only if the registrant is determined to be eligible to register to vote and the information on the registration affidavit is verified.²⁴⁶

In addition, preexisting law requires county elections officials to provide a CVR voter with a provisional ballot. Under Elections Code section 2170(d)(3):

The elections official shall conduct the receipt and handling of each conditional voter registration *and offer and receive a corresponding provisional ballot* in a manner that protects the secrecy of the ballot and allows the elections official to process the registration, to determine the registrant's eligibility to register, and to validate the registrant's information before counting or rejecting the corresponding provisional ballot.²⁴⁷

Furthermore, processing conditional voter registrations and CVR provisional ballots pursuant to Elections Code section 2170(d)(4) and (d)(5) are not newly required by the test claim statute. Elections Code section 2170(d)(4) and (d)(5), which were enacted by Statutes 2012, chapter 497, provide that, in offering CVR and CVR provisional voting, county elections officials must:

- process the CVR registration, determine the CVR registrant’s eligibility to register, and validate the registrant’s information before counting or rejecting the CVR voter’s ballot (Elections Code section 2170(d)(4)); and
- if the CVR is deemed effective, include the CVR voter’s ballot in the official canvass. (Elections Code section 2170(d)(5).

Under these provisions, the claimant alleges that as a result of the test claim statute, the county elections official was required to hire additional staff to process CVR registration forms and CVR provisional ballots and to purchase automated vote processing equipment to sort CVR provisional ballot envelopes.²⁴⁸ The claimant argues that while purchasing the automated equipment to process the additional CVR provisional ballots was not expressly required by the test claim statute, doing so was necessary to avoid the higher labor costs that would have accrued otherwise.²⁴⁹ However, even though the claimant may have incurred increased costs because more CVRs and CVR provisional ballots were provided and returned, the requirements in

²⁴⁴ Elections Code section 2170(d)(1) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2).

²⁴⁵ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20022; see Elections Code sections 2102 (as last amended by Stats. 2015, ch. 736), 2150, 2170(a).

²⁴⁶ Elections Code section 2170(d)(2) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2).

²⁴⁷ Elections Code section 2170(d)(3) (Stats. 2012, ch. 497, § 2).

²⁴⁸ Exhibit A, Test Claim, filed December 23, 2020, pages 17 19.

²⁴⁹ Exhibit C, Claimant’s Rebuttal Comments, filed May 5, 2021, page 6.

Elections Code section 2170(d)(4) and (d)(5) were added by Statutes 2012, chapter 497, are not new, and were not amended by the test claim statute.²⁵⁰

In addition, counties have long had the duty to process conditional voter registrations and include CVR provisional ballots in the official canvass. Preexisting law requires a conditional voter registration to be processed in the same manner as a general voter registration.²⁵¹ Processing ballots is governed by other code sections that became effective before the enactment of the test claim statute. A provisional ballot cast by a conditional voter registrant is subject to the same requirements as apply to provisional voting generally.²⁵² Additionally, section 20025 of the Secretary of State's regulations specifies the procedures to be followed when processing a CVR provisional ballot, none of which were changed as a result of the test claim statute.²⁵³ Because county elections officials have a preexisting duty to process CVRs and CVR provisional ballots, these activities are not newly required by the test claim statute.

Prior law did not specify the procedures now stated in Elections Code section 2170(e) when providing a CVR provisional ballot. As discussed above, section 2170(e)(1) through (e)(3) address different situations that may arise at CVR locations, including polling places, depending on whether the CVR voter's precinct can be determined and a precinct-specific ballot is available. However, county elections officials have been required to have the means to determine a CVR voter's precinct and access to a precinct-specific ballot at their permanent offices since before the enactment of the test claim statute.²⁵⁴ Therefore, the requirement under (e)(1) to provide the CVR voter with a ballot for the voter's precinct is not newly required.

Furthermore, providing a CVR voter with a ballot for the voter's precinct does not require the county elections official to perform any new activities. If the polling place has the capability to determine and produce a ballot for the CVR voter's precinct, it must do so. If not, then under the language of (e)(2), providing the CVR voter with whatever ballot is available at that polling place is sufficient. Under either scenario, the county elections official is performing the same activity it was already required to perform: providing a provisional ballot.

The activities under (e)(2) are limited to providing the CVR voter with a ballot that is available at that polling place and informing the voter that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted pursuant to Elections Code section 14310(c)(3). Neither of these require a county elections official to perform new activities. As discussed above, providing the CVR voter with "a ballot"

²⁵⁰ Elections Code section 2170(d)(4), (d)(5) (as added by Stats. 2012, ch. 497).

²⁵¹ Elections Code section 2171(b).

²⁵² Elections Code sections 2171(c), 14310, 15350, and 15100-15112; see also Exhibit F(4), California Secretary of State, Provisional Voting, <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/provisional-voting> (accessed on June 2, 2021), page 3.

²⁵³ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20025.

²⁵⁴ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023(d), (Register 2018, No. 10).

does not require the county elections official to perform any new activities.²⁵⁵ In addition, Elections Code section 14310(c)(3) has long provided the following:

(c)(3) The provisional ballot of a voter who is otherwise entitled to vote shall not be rejected because the voter did not cast his or her ballot in the precinct to which he or she was assigned by the elections official.

(A) If the ballot cast by the voter contains the same candidates and measures on which the voter would have been entitled to vote in his or her assigned precinct, the elections official shall count the votes for the entire ballot.

(B) If the ballot cast by the voter contains candidates or measures on which the voter would not have been entitled to vote in his or her assigned precinct, the elections official shall count only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter was entitled to vote in his or her assigned precinct.²⁵⁶

Furthermore, preexisting law requires that county elections officials provide any voter casting a provisional ballot with written instructions regarding the process and procedures for casting a provisional ballot, which must include, amongst other things, the information set forth in Elections Code section 14310(c)(3).²⁵⁷ Elections Code section 14310(a)(2) provides as follows:

(a) At all elections, a voter claiming to be properly registered, but whose qualification or entitlement to vote cannot be immediately established upon examination of the roster for the precinct or upon examination of the records on file with the county elections official, shall be entitled to vote a provisional ballot as follows:

[¶]

(2) The voter shall be provided a provisional ballot, written instructions regarding the process and procedures for casting the ballot, and a written affirmation regarding the voter's registration and eligibility to vote. The written instructions shall include the information set forth in subdivisions (c) and (d).²⁵⁸

Therefore, the requirement under Elections Code section 2170(e)(2), to “inform the [CVR] voter that only the votes for the candidates and measures on which the voter would be entitled to vote in the voter's assigned precinct may be counted pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 14310” is not new.

Elections Code section 2170(e)(3) provides that if the elections official is able to determine the CVR voter's precinct, but a ballot for the voter's precinct is unavailable, then the elections

²⁵⁵ Elections Code section 2170(d)(3) (as amended by Stats. 2015, ch. 734).

²⁵⁶ Elections Code section 14310(c)(3) (as last amended by Stats. 2017, Ch. 806).

²⁵⁷ Elections Code section 14310(a)(2) (as last amended by Stats. 2017, Ch. 806).

²⁵⁸ Elections Code section 14310(a)(2), (as last amended by Stats. 2017, Ch. 806).

official may inform the voter where the voter’s polling place is located. Because county elections offices are required to have the means to determine a CVR voter’s precinct and provide a ballot for the voter’s precinct, the scenario contemplated under section 2170(e)(3) is limited to polling places, which may or may not have the equipment necessary to determine a CVR voter’s assigned precinct.²⁵⁹ However, under preexisting law, county elections officials have a general duty to ensure that voters are able to locate their assigned polling place.²⁶⁰ The Secretary of State’s Poll Worker Training Standards, which are intended to provide elections officials with the necessary information for training poll workers, state as follows:

If voters are in the wrong polling place, poll workers should tell them they can either go to their assigned polling place to vote a polling place ballot or they can stay and cast a provisional ballot. The poll workers should also explain the advantages and disadvantages of each option. For example, the polling place ballot may not contain all of the same candidates and measures as the ballot in a voter’s home precinct. If this type of situation occurs late in the day, the poll worker should let the voter know that if the voter arrives at their assigned polling place after 8:00 p.m., the voter will not be allowed to cast a ballot.²⁶¹

The Poll Worker Training Standards further state, consistent with the language of Elections Code section 2170(e)(3), that “[i]f the ballot for the voter’s precinct is not available, the poll worker may inform the voter of the location of their polling place.”²⁶²

Because county elections officials already have a general duty to assist voters in determining their polling place, and polling places are already required to make available to voters a means to obtain information about the voter’s polling place, requiring county elections officials to inform CVR voters where their polling place is located, when they have the means to do so, does not require the county elections official to perform any new activities.

This claim is similar to *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration*, 01-TC-15. In *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration*, 01-TC-15, prior law allowed voters to newly register to vote, reregister, or change their address with county elections officials until the twenty-ninth day before an election. After that date, voter registration closed for that election.²⁶³ The test claim statute allowed new

²⁵⁹ California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 20023(d).

²⁶⁰ Elections Code section 12105(a) (“The elections official shall, not less than one week before the election, publish the list of the polling places designated for each election precinct.”); Elections Code section 14105(h) (the elections official shall provide a “sufficient number of cards to each polling place containing the telephone number of the office to which a voter may call to obtain information about his or her polling place. The card shall state that the voter may call collect during polling hours”).

²⁶¹ Exhibit F(3), Excerpt from California Secretary of State, 2021 Poll Worker Training Standards (Rev. August 2021), pages 5-6.

²⁶² Exhibit F(3), Excerpt from California Secretary of State, 2021 Poll Worker Training Standards (Rev. August 2021), page 3.

²⁶³ Exhibit F(6), Excerpt from Commission on State Mandates, Statement of Decision for *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration*, 01-TC-15, adopted October 31, 2006, page 2.

registrations or changes to voter registrations through the fifteenth day before an election.²⁶⁴ The Commission concluded that the majority of the statutory provisions at issue did not constitute a new program or higher level of service because the activities required of the county – processing and accepting voter registration affidavits and changes of address – were not newly required. County elections officials had been required to perform those activities long before the enactment of the test claim statute.²⁶⁵

Similarly, here, expanding the locations where county elections officials are required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting does not impose any new or additional activities on county elections officials. Even without the test claim statute, counties are required to provide conditional voter registrations and provisional ballots *to all voters* requesting them regardless of the cost, and that has not changed. Nor does the test claim statute change *when* CVR and CVR provisional voting must be made available to voters, or require counties to create new polling places, vote centers, or satellite offices to provide these existing services. Under the test claim statute, county elections officials are simply performing the same activities during the same time period as was required under preexisting law, except at additional, existing locations.

Accordingly, the test claim statute does not require counties to perform any new or additional activities or shift financial responsibility for conducting elections from the state to the counties and, thus, does not impose a new program or higher level of service.

- b. The cases relied on by the claimant do not support the finding that the test claim statute imposes a new program or higher level of service.

In comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, the claimant argues that because the test claim statute newly requires counties to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting at “expanded times and locations,” it constitutes a new program or higher level of service.²⁶⁶

Here, SB 72 increased the “actual level or quality” of county election officials’ preexisting CVR duties by expanding the dates and locations on which these services must be offered. *San Diego Unified Sch. Dist.*, *supra*, 33 Cal. 4th at 877. This increased service constitutes a “new program” because the requirements to offer CVR in polling places and at satellite locations during the 14-day period prior to the election and on election day were new and provided a uniquely governmental service.²⁶⁷

As explained above, the test claim statute did not expand the dates for which the county must provide CVR and CVR provisional voting. The statute only requires counties to perform those

²⁶⁴ Exhibit F(6), Excerpt from Commission on State Mandates, Statement of Decision for *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration*, 01-TC-15, adopted October 31, 2006, page 2.

²⁶⁵ Exhibit F(6), Excerpt from Commission on State Mandates, Statement of Decision for *Fifteen Day Close of Voter Registration*, 01-TC-15, adopted October 31, 2006, page 2.

²⁶⁶ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 6.

²⁶⁷ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 5.

same services at existing satellite offices and polling places (defined to include vote centers), in addition to permanent county elections offices.

Nevertheless, the claimant asserts that unlike the statutes in *City of Richmond v. Commission on State Mandates* (1998) 64 Cal.App.4th 1190, 1196, *City of Anaheim v. State* (1987) 189 Cal.App.3d 1478, and *County of Los Angeles v. State of California* (1987) 43 Cal.3d 46, which involved incidental requirements that were not unique to government or did not require local government to increase the level of services provided to the public, but simply resulted in increased costs, the test claim statute here requires counties to provide *expanded* services to the public.²⁶⁸

In contrast to merely imposing a “higher costs,” [sic] when a statute requires that a local government must provide an “expanded” version of a service it is already providing to the public (as is true here), this is a reimbursable mandate. That is because the increased costs are not merely an incidental effect of a law of general application. Rather, the increased costs are borne by the local government in order to provide expanded services to the public.²⁶⁹

The claimant relies on *Carmel Valley Fire Protection Dist. v. State of California* (1987) 190 Cal.App.3d 521, *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, and *Department of Finance. v. Commission State Mandates* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 546 to support its position that a statute that requires a local government to provide an expanded version of a service it is already providing to the public constitutes a reimbursable mandate.²⁷⁰

For example, in *Carmel Valley Fire Protec. Dist. v. State of California*, 190 Cal. App. 3d 521, 537–38 (1987), the Court held that a requirement in an executive order to provide “updated equipment” to firefighters was a reimbursable mandate. The Court emphasized that fire protection is an essential and basic function of local government. *Id.* at 537. Thus the updated equipment was necessary for the government to better provide that service. *See San Diego Unified Sch. Dist.*, *supra*, 33 Cal.4th at 877 (“Because this increased safety equipment apparently was designed to result in more effective fire protection, the mandate evidently was intended to produce a higher level of service to the public....”)

In *Carmel Valley*, the local governments were already providing firefighting services to the public—and certainly were already using some equipment (hence the mandate to provide “updated” equipment). But the Court held that the requirement to update the equipment was a “new program” under Section 6. [Footnote omitted] Thus this additional mandated cost that the local governments

²⁶⁸ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, pages 2-3.

²⁶⁹ Exhibit E, Claimant’s comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 4.

²⁷⁰ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, pages 4-5.

incurred in order to provide basic government services was reimbursable. *Carmel Valley*, 190 Cal.App.3d at 537.

The Supreme Court of California honed in on the distinction between “higher costs” and a “higher level of service” in *San Diego Unified Sch. Dist.*, *supra*, 33 Cal.4th at 878. In that case, the statute at issue required schools to expel students under certain circumstances. 33 Cal.4th at 868-69. The Supreme Court of California held that the schools’ new duties to provide mandatory hearings constituted a higher level of service. *Id.* at 878-89. This was because the requirements did not exist prior to the statute, the mandate applied uniquely to public schools, and because enhancing the safety of the students was a service to the public. *Id.* at 879. In its discussion, the Court distinguished other cases in which Courts of Appeal found that statutes did not impose mandates when the statutes imposed universal requirements on private employers and local governments alike. *Id.* (citing *County of Los Angeles*, *supra*, and *City of Sacramento v. State of California*, 50 Cal. 3d 51 (1990).) The Supreme Court explained that simply because a state law increases the costs borne by local government in providing services, that does not automatically render the law a reimbursable mandate. *Id.* at 876. However, the Supreme Court contrasted such laws with statutes that impose an “increase in the actual level or quality of governmental services provided,” which do impose reimbursable mandates. *Id.* at 877.

A recent Court of Appeal decision also highlighted this distinction. *Dep’t. of Fin. v. Comm’n. on State Mandates*, 59 Cal. App. 5th 546 (2021) (*Dep’t of Fin.*). In *Dep’t. of Fin.*, the County of Los Angeles historically provided stormwater drainage and flood control services. A new Regional Board stormwater permit mandated the installation and maintenance of trash receptacles at transit stops, and the inspection of facilities to ensure compliance. *Id.* at 558. The court held that even though the County already provided stormwater drainage and flood control services, the new requirements imposed a “higher level of service” because they reduced pollution and increased compliance. *Id.* at 558. The court held that alternatively, the requirements were a new program because they provided a government service that was not mandated prior to the permit. *Id.* at 559.²⁷¹

However, unlike this case, the statutes and executive orders in the above cases required local government to perform *new activities that were not required by prior state law*. As indicated above, the court in *San Diego Unified School Dist.* determined that statutory requirements compelling suspension and mandating a recommendation of expulsion for certain offenses committed by K-12 students “are new in comparison with the preexisting scheme in view of the

²⁷¹ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, pages 4-5.

circumstance that they did not exist prior to the enactment of [the test claim statutes at issue].”²⁷² Only after finding that the duties were new did the court continue its analysis to find that the duties were unique to local government and provided a service to the public.²⁷³

Similarly, in *Department of Finance. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 546, the court found that installing and maintaining trash receptacles at transit stops and performing certain inspections were both *new duties* that local governments were required to perform, before concluding that the activities constituted a program within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6, and thus a new program or higher level of service.²⁷⁴

Turning to the instant case, there are three pertinent governmental functions implicated by the challenged requirements for purposes of section 6: The operation of stormwater drainage and flood control systems; the installation and maintenance of trash receptacles at transit stops; and the inspection of commercial, industrial, and construction facilities and sites to ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations. The first existed prior to the Regional Board's permit; *the other two are new*. Each is a governmental function that provides services to the public, and the carrying out of such functions are thus programs under the first part of the Supreme Court's definition of that term.

In the case of the provision of stormwater drainage and flood control services, the trash receptacle requirement provides a higher level of service because it, together with other requirements, will reduce pollution entering stormwater drainage systems and receiving waters...

The inspection requirements provide a higher level of service because they promote and enforce third party compliance with environmental regulations limiting the amount of pollutants that enter storm drains and receiving waters.²⁷⁵

The claimant also cites to the *Carmel Valley* case, asserting the following: “In *Carmel Valley*, the local governments were already providing firefighting services to the public—and *certainly were already using some equipment (hence the mandate to provide “updated” equipment)*.”²⁷⁶ However, the claimant cites no law to indicate that the regulatory requirements were not newly imposed by the state on fire protection districts. The regulatory requirements to provide protective clothing and safety equipment had to be newly required by state law for the Board of

²⁷² *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 878. See also page 869, footnotes 6 and 7, and page 871, footnote 9, where the court describes in detail the state of the law immediately before the enactment of the test claim statutes at issue.

²⁷³ *San Diego Unified School Dist. v. Commission on State Mandates* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 859, 878 (“the requirements were intended to provide an enhanced service to the public—safer schools for the vast majority of students”).

²⁷⁴ *Department of Finance. v. Commission State Mandates* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 546, 558.

²⁷⁵ *Department of Finance v. Commission on State Mandates* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 546, 558

²⁷⁶ Exhibit E, Claimant’s Comments on the Draft Proposed Decision, filed October 20, 2021, page 4, emphasis added.

Control (the Commission's predecessor) and the court to approve reimbursement under the California Constitution. As recognized by Government Code section 17565, even if a local agency or a school district, at its option, has been incurring costs which are subsequently mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the local agency or school district for those costs incurred after the operative date of the mandate.²⁷⁷

As explained in the *Carmel Valley* decision, the regulations were adopted by the Department of Industrial Relations in 1978 after the Legislature enacted the California Occupational Safety and Health Act (Cal/OSHA) in Statutes 1973, chapter 993. Cal/OSHA is modeled after federal law and is designed to ensure safe working conditions for all California workers.²⁷⁸ Under the Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board within the Department of Industrial Relations is responsible for adopting occupational safety and health standards and orders, and the regulations at issue in *Carmel Valley* were adopted in 1978 pursuant to that law.²⁷⁹

After the Board of Control approved the Test Claim, the Legislature failed to appropriate funds for mandate reimbursement, claiming in part that the requirements were mandated by federal law. The court, however, determined that the requirements to provide protective clothing and safety equipment were not mandated by existing federal law, but were state mandated requirements imposed by the 1978 regulations.²⁸⁰ The court also found that reimbursement was required pursuant to article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution because the regulations were passed after January 1, 1975.²⁸¹ Therefore, even though the court found the regulatory requirements to be "updated," the requirements had to be newly mandated by the state on fire protection districts in order to be reimbursable under article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution.

Counties have long been required to provide CVR and CVR provisional voting to all voters that request them, regardless of the cost, during the 14 days before the election and on election day, and the test claim statute does not require counties to perform any new or additional activities. Accordingly, the Commission finds that the test claim statute does not impose a new program or higher level of service within the meaning of article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution.

²⁷⁷ Government Code section 17565 implements the article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution. However, the same provision was contained in the former statutory mandate scheme and was derived from former Revenue and Taxation Code section 2234 (added by Stats. 1975, ch. 486, § 9, amended by Stats. 1977, ch. 1135, § 8.6; Stats. 1980, ch. 1256, § 11).

²⁷⁸ *Carmel Valley Fire Protection Dist. v. State of California* (1987) 190 Cal.App.3d 521, 541-542.

²⁷⁹ Labor Code sections 140, 142.3, and 6305. See also, *Carmel Valley Fire Protection Dist. v. State of California* (2001) 25 Cal.4th 287, 293-294 (which also addressed the program after the Legislature suspended it pursuant to Government Code section 17581).

²⁸⁰ *Carmel Valley Fire Protection Dist. v. State of California* (1987) 190 Cal.App.3d 521, 544.

²⁸¹ *Carmel Valley Fire Protection Dist. v. State of California* (1987) 190 Cal.App.3d 521, 548.

V. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis, the Commission concludes that Elections Code section 2170, as amended by the test claim statute (Stats. 2019, ch. 565), does not impose a reimbursable state-mandated program under article XIII B, section 6 of the California Constitution and Government Code section 17514.

Accordingly, the Commission denies this Test Claim.

DECLARATION OF SERVICE BY EMAIL

I, the undersigned, declare as follows:

I am a resident of the County of Sacramento and I am over the age of 18 years, and not a party to the within action. My place of employment is 980 Ninth Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, California 95814.

On November 16, 2021, I served the:

- **Proposed Decision issued November 16, 2021**

Extended Conditional Voter Registration, 20-TC-02

Elections Code Section 2170 as Amended by Statutes 2019, Chapter 565 (SB 72)

County of San Diego, Claimant

by making it available on the Commission's website and providing notice of how to locate it to the email addresses provided on the attached mailing list.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct, and that this declaration was executed on November 16, 2021 at Sacramento, California.



Jill L. Magee

Commission on State Mandates

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COMMISSION ON STATE MANDATES

Mailing List

Last Updated: 9/15/21

Claim Number: 20-TC-02

Matter: Extended Conditional Voter Registration

Claimant: County of San Diego

TO ALL PARTIES, INTERESTED PARTIES, AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

Each commission mailing list is continuously updated as requests are received to include or remove any party or person on the mailing list. A current mailing list is provided with commission correspondence, and a copy of the current mailing list is available upon request at any time. Except as provided otherwise by commission rule, when a party or interested party files any written material with the commission concerning a claim, it shall simultaneously serve a copy of the written material on the parties and interested parties to the claim identified on the mailing list provided by the commission. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 1181.3.)

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