

Contact: Brent Turner
Phone: 650-726-1133

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CAVO endorses alternative to elimination of poll site voting

San Francisco, California – October 3, 2016 – Senate Bill 450 was signed into law last week by Governor Jerry Brown, indicating the potential elimination of poll sites in California. Instead, voters would receive a paper ballot in the mail rather than casting their ballots in person at neighborhood polling places.

Mindy Romero, director of UC Davis' California Civic Engagement Project, said there is a "trust" issue with many Latino voters in assuring their vote will make it through the mail and ultimately be counted. "When they go in person, they know they've actually cast their ballot," Romero said.

Bernal Heights resident Jose Najera, a San Francisco native, remarked "I've been voting at a local polling place for 30 years, and I was shocked to learn I may have to trust my vote to the mail system or travel many miles in order to deposit my ballot in person. I prefer the convenience and security of voting in my neighborhood."

"I'm frankly surprised that there has not been a more robust discussion in the Legislature about whether it's a good idea to eliminate polling places," said Kim Alexander, president of the nonpartisan California Voter Foundation.

While counties are not required to adopt the new model, many people continue to look for ways to make poll site voting more affordable. According to elections analyst Alan Dechert, the solution has been made available. Voting systems in use today are old and in need of replacing, but new systems from the current vendors may not be cost-effective. "Setting up proprietary voting systems for every precinct has become so expensive and burdensome that there is a strong incentive to cut services by eliminating poll sites," says analyst Dechert.

According to Dechert, there is a way to maintain poll site voting while reducing costs and improving service via the use of free open source software and inexpensive commonly available hardware. Recently, members of the California Association of Voting Officials (CAVO), along with representatives of California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, met with Dechert to discuss open source voting progress.

<http://openvoting.org/ad/dechert2SosAlexPadilla.pdf>

The concept has been demonstrated in mock elections many times over the years. High certification costs have presented a high barrier, but this can be overcome as counties are showing interest in pooling resources to develop their own low-cost voting equipment. San Francisco County is a leader, and has recently budgeted \$300,000 to get started on the work.

The newly formed California Association of Voting Officials (CAVO) plans to bring together users and makers of the technology, pool resources, set standards, and make sure vendors and others are trained for the new open source voting systems. Nevertheless, the new election model outlined in SB 450 won't impact the upcoming November 2016 elections.

For more information on CAVO and open source election system security solutions, visit www.cavo-us.org.