

Analysis of Workforce and Infrastructure Options for the Registrar of Voters



Registrar of Voters
County of Lake

Executive Summary

On May 13, 2025, the Registrar of Voters presented an agenda item to consider a proposal to invest in staffing, infrastructure and technology for the department. This proposal, initiated at the request of the Lake County Board of Supervisors, addressed the pace at which ballot results were released post-election and solutions the Registrar believed would best improve overall performance.

At the meeting several solutions were offered including temporarily moving election operations during peak election cycles and the rental of a van. Additionally, the Board seemed open to considering a reclassification for one position and acquiring a Signature Verification System. The Registrar was directed to contact the space committee to begin discussions on facility needs.

Concerns over not having reviewed the next fiscal year budget was the reason that the Registrar of Voters was invited back to provide estimates for the Supervisors to consider. In response, the Registrar of Voters office has undertaken the most thorough study and analysis of the feasibility and fiscal impact of each item that was discussed. This document attempts to address the staffing, security and space needs, as well as the logistical aspects of; a staff reclass, adding a part-time position, procuring temporary space, the acquisition of a signature verification system and a vehicle to meet department needs.

By refining roles and investing in expanding our workforce we can continue to improve our methods in election conduct. A key component of this effort is the redistribution of tasks to enhance specialization within our team. This ensures that the department continues to strategically adapt to the legislative changes and operational demands efficiently and effectively.

After reviewing the Board's suggestion, relocating election operations to a larger facility is not feasible due to significant costs and logistical challenges. We explored various options, including using the Board Chambers, placing a portable nearby, or renting the Silviera Community Center. However, security, chain of custody concerns, and financial impracticality make these alternatives unviable. For these reasons, maintaining current operations is in the best interest of both the department and the public.

The Board also expressed an interest in acquiring a signature verification system; however, the information available is currently limited. Until department is directed to begin the proposal process and funding is secured, a general overview of system capabilities is all that can be provided. Additionally, our office has access to reimbursement funds that could help mitigate a portion (3:1 match) of the financial impact of this purchase. However, space and staffing concerns must be addressed to ensure the system's effectiveness.

Finally, renting a van for the 30-day election cycle offers no meaningful benefit. While the rental of a U-Haul cargo van is not outside our current budget, rental from any other vendor is only available outside the county, which would divert staff at a time of peak workload. A permanent vehicle from Central Garage appears to be the most cost-effective solution, though availability is limited. At present, Central Garage can only provide SUVs rather than the van we requested.

Staffing

The redistribution of tasks to increase specialization has become a priority for the Registrar of Voters office. This analysis includes the description and budget needed to meet our staffing needs.

The roles within our department are constantly shifting as legislation regarding elections also changes. Many of the jurisdictions neighboring Lake County utilize an Elections Manager or Analyst that assists the Registrar and Deputy Registrar in addition to their elections specialist staff. This position usually entails a dedicated staff member who assists with campaign finance, budgetary analysis, media inquiries and public records requests to ensure consistent expertise in these critical areas. With focused responsibility, this individual can develop specialized knowledge and refined communication skills. This proactive approach not only enhances departmental efficiency but also strengthens transparency.

A reclass would define a staff member to focus on the expanded duties. This specialized position will create operational efficiency by freeing technical staff to focus on ballot processing and established job assignments. This will create long-term consistency within the department which is essential for building a succession plan for the department's future.

The addition of a part-time permanent employee to specialize in voter registration data entry will also greatly benefit the department. This position frees up existing staff to specialize in some of their current job duties. Due to legislative changes, accessibility and outreach requirements are expanding which means staff must dedicate more time and resources to these critical processes. During an election cycle and other peak times, this half-time staff member will work full-time to establish a production flow for efficient elections operations.

Hiring extra help employees is critical for the success of an election. For each election cycle we employ six to eight extra help staff, three extra help staff has been included in the departments proposed FY 25/26 budget. While extra help plays a vital role in election processing, the unpredictable, on-call nature of their hours makes it challenging to hire and retain experienced temporary staff between election cycles as we cannot offer a fixed schedule. If we successfully fill these extra help positions, we will consider implementing a split-shift to extend production hours and improve workflow efficiency.

Given the specialized expertise required in the field of elections, investing in permanent staff is beneficial to our department. This will provide the stability needed to ensure consistent expertise, operational efficiency, and long-term departmental success.

Fiscal Impacts

Staff Additions/Changes

Estimated Costs

Reclass of 1 Elections Assistant, Senior to Staff Services Analyst I/II	\$2,895 initial annual increase
Addition of 1 part-time permanent employee Included in the initial request for the 25/26 Fiscal Year budget submission	\$46,058 initial annual cost
3 Additional Extra Help Positions Included in the initial request for the 25/26 Fiscal Year budget submission	\$13,276 initial annual cost

ROV Organization	Classification Code No.		Allocation in FY 24/25	Requested for FY 25/26
Registrar of Voters	1	-2111	1.00	1.00
Deputy Registrar of Voters	1	-2112	1.00	1.00
Staff Services Analyst I/II	4	-0723/0725	0.00	1.00
Elections Assistant, Senior	4	-0385	3.00	2.00
Elections Assistant, Senior	4	-0385	0.00	0.50
Extra Help	9	-9999	8.00	11.00

The Elections Specialist, Senior is currently at step 5 and would come in at step 2 of Staff Services Analyst I as shown below.

Class #	Classification Title	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
04-0387	ELECTIONS SPECIALIST, SR	21.83	22.93	24.07	25.28	26.54*
04-0723	STAFF SERVICES ANALYST I	26.60	27.93*	29.33	30.80	32.34
04-0725	STAFF SERVICES ANALYST II	29.37	30.83	32.38	33.99	35.69

*Shows pre negotiation hourly rates

Department Recommendation

Approve the staff reclassification, addition of one part-time permanent staff, and 3 additional extra help positions; and provide direction for inclusion in the FY 25/26 budget.

Temporary Building for Election Operations

The Registrar of Voters office staff researched several options for temporarily moving election operations to accommodate our space needs. Space needs were shared with the Board of Supervisors regarding the scarcity of space during peak election times, as these areas for processing election materials are used for multiple tasks.

Below are the location options explored:

Location Options

Option 1: Reserve Board Chambers

- E-29 through E+28/30 Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays
- Equipment Needed: Secure Ballot Transport Bags

Concerns:

- Transporting election materials that are open to the elements (rain, wind etc.), chain of custody, security and limited availability

Option 2: Lease Portable Modular Unit

- Rental of parking lot: owner willing to negotiate for long term only
- Place a portable in the parking lot (next to the ROV Office)
- Permit requirements: Depends on usage per City Planning Office
- Insurance Costs

Concerns:

- Transporting election materials that are open to the elements (rain, wind etc.)
- Scheduling temporary network connection is not guaranteed in a timely manner

Option 3: Silveira Community Center

- Unavailable for the foreseeable future due to scheduled projects and upgrades to the location

Concerns:

- Main room would need temporary modifications to accommodate desks and separated from the public.
- Secured rooms are not available.
- Scheduling temporary network connection is not guaranteed in a timely manner

Security and contingency planning

Beyond the financial aspect, the issue of maintaining the security of election materials is the highest priority for the department. Staff maintain election material security by adhering to chain of custody procedures. Not only are election materials stored in secure rooms with limited staff access, but chain of custody procedures must be followed once processing has begun. While examining the various options for temporarily moving election operations we have identified that movement of such election materials creates potential security concerns. This includes, but is not limited to, election materials being dropped during transport, damage from the elements, as well as risk of compromise by means of unauthorized access or intrusion.

Election materials, no matter where they are temporarily transferred too, will need to be moved daily from the Registrar's office to the processing center, and back again. With each transport we will face these security concerns. Additionally, procedures would need to be created to respond appropriately to any potential threat. This would include collaboration across multiple agencies within the County, Municipalities, and the State.

Personal and Management Logistics

The Registrar of Voters office processed over 27,000 ballots for the November 5, 2024, General Election. Depending on which part of the process is moved, large quantities of items would be transported daily between the Registrar of Voter's office and whichever location is chosen. Most election materials must be always kept in the custody of two or more individuals, this means that staff will be diverted away from regular processes to move these items. This will take considerable time and energy of staff which may undermine the intended goal. Our department also reached out to I.T. to determine what is needed for moving operations including network connection. Unfortunately, setting up a scheduled network connection would not be a guarantee.

Current Space

Our current office space consists of a little under 2,000 square feet which includes two restrooms (approx. 12'x10'). The Registrar of Voters Office entered into a 10-year lease agreement on August 1, 2021, for our current location. The contract includes a termination clause which would allow, if both parties agree, termination. Currently we are making plans to go before the space committee to find a long-term solution for the Department's space needs.

Comparing Jurisdictions

To align with industry best practices, our office reached out to four of the surrounding jurisdictions. Most counties process election materials in house; the largest counties use permanent processing facilities. This was the feedback that we received from comparable counties.

County 1 – All their ballot processing takes place in house. All ADA equipment and Vote Center supplies are stored in a storage facility across the street.

County 2 – All their ballot processing takes place in house. Has visited the L.A. County processing plant and described it as massive.

County 3 – All processes are done in house, other than the election materials that are moved to storage after the election is over for retention purposes. Stated that the concern for security outweighs the intension of providing temporary space.

County 4 – All processes are done in house; all equipment is stored onsite.

Fiscal Impacts

Location Options	Estimated Costs
Option 1: Reserve Board Chambers - Ballot Transport Containers	\$300 to \$2,000
Option 2: Lease a Portable or Modular unit (1 to 8 months lease)	25,777.64 to 51,042.75
Option 3: Silveira Community Center - Network Connection - Office equipment	Daily Rate: \$300 Cleaning Fee: \$150 Security Deposit: \$250 Open to negotiations for long term usage \$518.65 per mo. \$2000+

Department Recommendation

Based on the feedback we received from surrounding counties, chain of custody procedures, the uncertainty of network connection, and the financial impact for temporarily moving election processes during the election cycle; the Registrar of Voters strongly recommends against this practice and will await the space committee recommendation.

Signature Verification System

The use of vote by mail ballots has increased significantly over the past 20 years. In response to this increase and the weekly reporting requirements, the Registrar of Voters office has considered how a signature verification system will assist our department with the processing of vote by mail ballots. Signature verification systems are often customizable to meet the processing needs of counties including sorting, stamping and opening vote by mail ballots. The acquisition of a signature verification system may help increase production and streamline ballot processing.

Staff Requirements

Implementing a system of this type will require both training and operation, both of which need staff that have the technical skills needed to meet operational expectations. With training, current staff can reach a certain level of technological proficiency required. However, this diversion may impact our day-to-day operations without appropriate staffing levels.

Space Requirements

A signature verification system is a scanning and sorting machine that in some cases are very large. Even some of the smaller machines require adequate space in addition to walk around work area. The projected space required is approximately 200 square feet. It will be difficult to complete election related tasks if our space is limited further. Since temporarily moving election operations is not feasible, we would require a larger working space to accommodate such a system. Currently we are making plans to go before the space committee to find a long-term solution for the Registrar's space needs.

Fiscal Impacts

Outside of the initial cost for a signature verification system, software licensing and maintenance agreement costs would occur annually. The Registrar of Voters office, as mentioned during the 5/13/2025 board meeting, has \$131,832.66 in Voting System Replacement funds which can be reimbursed to the County after purchasing such a system. The funds to purchase voting system equipment expire August 31, 2026. The funds are a 3:1 match up to the remainder of the contract funds. Per the County of Lake purchasing policy, this office would need to begin Requests for Proposals (RFP) before providing any specific information about system costs and capabilities.

Department Recommendation

A signature verification system should be acquired in tandem with the appropriate staff and space. Without these items, purchasing a signature verification system may be counterproductive. Direction from Board of Supervisors to begin the RFP process.

Vehicle Needs

The Registrar of Voters office has expressed a need for a long-term vehicle solution. While a vehicle, specifically a van is needed the most during the election cycle, this department is also responsible for engaging in voter outreach, polling place surveys, and record and inventory management at our offsite storage locations. With the fluctuating nature of duties, staff availability may change and scheduling with Central Garage can be challenging. Based on feedback from some members of the Board of Supervisors we have explored several options and how they impact our budget.

Our vehicle usage fluctuates depending on our outreach efforts and accessibility survey needs. On average we use a vehicle 70 days per fiscal year which typically costs \$2,264.02, not including our travel to conferences and training. Renting a utility van for 40 days during the election cycle is not a cost-effective long-term solution, as its recurring expenses could become a financial strain.

This department was recently made aware that a permanently assigned carpool vehicle was an option available to us. A permanently assigned vehicle from Central Garage will allow us to accomplish department goals since we would be able to use the vehicle based on the availability of staff. Additionally, the cost of a permanently assigned vehicle would not affect our budget significantly since the overall costs are currently budgeted.

Fiscal Impacts

Vehicle Options	Estimated Costs
Option 1: Permanently assigned vehicle Central Garage - Includes fuel costs up to 900 miles per month, any overages will incur additional costs	\$261 monthly
Option 2: Purchase of a Van	\$45,880.91
Option 3: Cargo Van Rental - U-Haul: 40 days - Enterprise: 10,000 miles (Santa Rosa only)	\$1,197 plus fuel \$4,570.25 plus fuel
Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget (29-50)	\$4,050

Department Recommendation

After reviewing department usage and considering current budgetary constraints, it is recommended that the assignment of a permanent carpool vehicle would best serve the departmental needs.

Conclusion

Through the work of this analysis, the Registrar of Voters office has been able to identify the best possible solutions based on the feedback we received.

Investing in a staff reclass and a part-time position will help sustain the high-quality effectiveness of this department's operations. The addition of 3 extra help positions, if filled, will provide the added support needed for critical operations during an election cycle.

Staff support is the most valuable investment our department seeks. While the procurement of a temporary working space could solve our space needs which are heavily impacted during the election cycle, the significant security concerns, the significant ongoing expenses and network issues make it an unviable solution.

Technology changes improve many aspects of county operations, including elections which is why a Signature Verifications System can appear enticing. While the capabilities of this system could greatly assist the Registrar's workflow, without the facilities and staff to properly store and operate this equipment, it may not effectively enhance the intended operation.

Finally, obtaining a permanently assigned vehicle, as it is within the department's established budget, will greatly serve our needs for election day; voter outreach; polling place surveys and storage management.

This analysis aims to secure the necessary budget for the recommended items while remaining open to any additional insights or guidance the Board of Supervisors may provide to ensure the department's continued success