



# Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

Dean C. Logan Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

December 15, 2015

TO: Supervisor Hilda Solis, Chair

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

Supervisor Don Knabe

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl

Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer

Dean C. Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk FROM:

# VSAP Quarterly Report - 4th Quarter, 2015

The following is the fourth quarterly update of 2015, detailing project activities and accomplishments during the period of September 1 – November 30, 2015. These reports are provided to inform your Board and the public on the progress of the Voting Systems Assessment Project (VSAP). This quarterly report is prepared in response to the motion adopted by your Board on September 7, 2010.

In this reporting period, the Department continued to refine the system design and software engineering specifications of the Ballot Marking Device (BMD) and all other components of the new voting system. A series of discussion sessions were conducted with the Technical Advisory Committee to gather their expert opinion on various features of the system. These decisions are crucial as we approach the conclusion of Phase III and prepare for the Manufacturing and Certification Phase in 2016.

The Department, in coordination with IDEO, conducted user testing to gauge the usability and accessibility of the proposed Vote By Mail ballot design. Guided by the same principles used in designing the new voting experience at the polls, this research sought to gather qualitative feedback from voters as we create a Vote By Mail experience that is voter-centered and sensitive to the needs of this portion of Los Angeles County electorate.

#### **System Design and Specifications Development**

The Department has been working on the development of a Software Solution Design Document (SSDD) with contractor, IDEO. The SSDD provides a detailed specification for the enterprise software architecture of the new voting system. The process of developing the SSDD began early in Phase III and has been evolving with ever more detail about the current and future state of Los Angeles County's voting system as the design and engineering work has proceeded. The Department is currently reviewing version 3 of the document and providing critical feedback to IDEO to ensure the enterprise

software architecture is viable and meets the overall goals and principles of the project. The fourth and final version of the SSDD is expected to be delivered in January of 2016.

The Technical Advisory Committee has been working closely with the Department and IDEO in the refinement of the BMD and the development of the software and engineering specifications. A series of conference calls were held between the VSAP team, members of the Technical Advisory Committee and IDEO to further discuss the critical features and functions of the BMD. Among the topics were: ballot verification, session time-out, write-in candidates and Interactive Sample Ballot (ISB).

The feedback from these discussions will significantly impact the decision making on the software and engineering aspects of the design. The members of the Technical Advisory Committee shared their expertise in election administration, election technology, and accessibility requirements. These discussions provided guidance to the VSAP team as we work towards the final voting system design.

#### **Vote By Mail User Testing**

The VSAP seeks to redefine the voter experience for all Los Angeles County voters, whether they vote at the polls or by mail. To date, the project has focused on the in-person voting experience. During this quarter, the Department has worked with IDEO to design a new Vote By Mail (VBM) ballot packet. The Department envisions a new voting experience that is usable, accessible, and private. In order to test and refine the ballot design, we conducted user testing with Los Angeles County voters. The goals of the user testing were to find out the voter's preferences such as the ballot size, font size and type, necessity of a secrecy sleeve, and the overall feedback on the proposed design.

Randomly selected individuals were invited to participate in the research. Specific categories were identified ranging from experienced Vote By Mail voters to new Vote By Mail voters, different age groups, and language groups. Partner organizations including the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County, National Association of Latino Elected Officials Educational Fund (NALEO), United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA), and the Korean Resource Center (KRC) assisted in the recruitment of participants. The Department reached out to the VSAP Advisory Committee and other community partners to ensure that all communities within the County were properly represented in this research.

Participants received the proposed Vote By Mail packet and were scheduled for a structured phone interview. Participants rated their voting experience on the following points: ease of finding contests, marking their selections, level of confidence on the privacy and anonymity of the experience, and trust in the system to successfully record their votes.

Currently, the researchers are evaluating the returned packets and will begin the analysis of the data gathered from the phone interviews. IDEO will report the results to the Department which will be used in refining the proposed design. We will provide further updates on the user testing results in the next quarterly report.

## Phase IV Planning

The Department has begun planning for the next phase of the project, the Manufacturing and Certification Phase. Members of the VSAP Internal Project Team have started to discuss and gather ideas for the contracting of a system manufacturer and the possible implementation strategies. At the conclusion of Phase III in early summer 2016, we will transition to an implementation, testing and

manufacturing phase which will likely include open competitive bidding processes for various elements of system manufacturing and procurement.

#### **Public and Stakeholder Engagement**

To maintain transparency and community engagement, the VSAP involved various stakeholders and organizations during this stage of the project. Requests for presentations and prototype demonstrations were conducted for various groups. The Department continued to meet with the advisory committees to give status updates and gather their feedback.

#### September 4-27, 2015 Los Angeles County Fair

The prototype appearance model was on display at the LA County Fair from September 4-27, 2015. The display allowed visitors to learn about our past through the history of the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, and look into the future of voting.

## September 16, 2015 - Community and Voter Outreach Committee (CVOC)

VSAP team members met with the CVOC to provide a project update. This included showing the updated Ballot Marking Device prototype, the findings from the May user testing sessions, and other project activities. The members were also informed that the most recent reports are available on the VSAP website.

#### September 29, 2015 – Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

VSAP team members met with the VAAC to provide a status update. The VSAP team presented the updated BMD prototype and discussed the results of the May user testing sessions. The members were also informed that the most recent reports may be accessed on the VSAP website. Requests from committee members for prototype demonstrations were noted and will be followed-up when the final design prototype is available.

#### October 5, 2015 South by Southwest Eco

The VSAP was featured in a session "Creating the Voting Experience of the Future" at the SXSW Eco Convention in Austin, Texas. The presentation showcased the collaboration between the Department and IDEO, and how technology and innovation is used to design the new voting system that will serve the large and complex LA County electorate.

#### October 10, 2015 California Council of the Blind

The VSAP team presented the current state of the project and conducted a demonstration of the audio features of the latest prototype model. The members of the organization interacted with the BMD prototype and provided their feedback.

# October 22-24, 2015 National Conference of State Legislatures Forum (NCSL)

The VSAP was invited to a meeting in Boulder, Colorado hosted by the NCSL to discuss election funding for election-related technology. In attendance were legislators, professionals and experts in the field of election administration. Participants shared their experiences, challenges, and recommendations as the NCSL shapes a two-year program to address election funding concerns.

#### October 28, 2015 Civic Tech Showcase

The VSAP was invited to conduct a presentation at the Civic Tech Showcase at Draper University in San Mateo, California. The showcase was coordinated by "Innovate Your State", a non-profit organization that is dedicated to educating and encouraging public participation to

fundamentally improve government. The presentation's focus was on the unique partnership between the public and private sector.

## November 18, 2015 Kiwanis Club of Downey

The VSAP team was invited by the Downey City Clerk's Office to give a project overview to the members of the Kiwanis Club of Downey. The VSAP team presented the appearance model and explained the process of the proposed new voting experience.

#### November 20, 2015 United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA)

UCPLA members were invited to participate in the Vote By Mail user testing. The participants interacted with the proposed Vote By Mail ballot and were asked to rate its usability and accessibility. A focus group discussion was also conducted where the members provided significant feedback on the proposed Vote By Mail ballot design.

### **Committee Update**

The Department welcomed two new members to the VSAP Advisory Committee. They are: Maria de la Luz Garcia, City Clerk of the City of Long Beach and Richard L. Hasen, Chancellor's Professor of Law and Political Science at the University of California, Irvine. Both individuals have extensive experience in election administration and public governance. They will provide their expertise, guidance, and input from their respective communities to ensure that the final system design adheres to the voting system principles.

## **Financial Report**

The Department has paid the amount of \$9,226,000 to IDEO in the current contract. The total contract amount is \$13,648,000. The upcoming deliverables are the Software Technical Proofs and Source Code.

As reported in our last update to your Board on October 2, 2015, our initial approval to utilize Proposition 41 Voting Modernization Bond (VMB) Act funds for the payment of this contract was withdrawn by the Voting Modernization Board based on legal interpretations on use and distribution of bond funds for research and development. We have since received guidance from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and approval by the Secretary of State to use the funds allocated to Los Angeles County by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) section 301 in lieu of Voting Modernization Bond funds for this phase of the project.

The Department currently has a balance of approximately \$22 million in HAVA 301 funds. These monies will be used as reimbursement for payments made on IDEO's design and engineering contract and to fund additional system development and manufacturing. As per advice from the Secretary of State, the County may begin submitting requests for reimbursement.

#### Media Coverage

As the project progresses, it continues to receive positive media coverage from various news organizations. The VSAP has been featured in the following articles and television news segments:

November 9, 2015 - Election Administration Reports - Volume 45, Number 22 http://www.lavote.net/Documents/vsap/press\_room/\_11092015\_november%209-final.pdf0

November 3, 2015 - Democracy for Everyone: Designing a Better Voting Machine http://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2015-11-03/democracy-for-everyone-designing-a-better-voting-machine

October 12, 2015 - America's Aging Voting Machines http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/10/12/opinion/americas-aging-voting-machines.html?\_r=3

October 12, 2015 - LA County's \$13M touch-screen voting system gets previewed at Austin's SXSW http://www.scpr.org/news/2015/10/09/54919/la-county-s-voting-overhaul-gets-a-preview-in-aust/

October 2, 2015 - L.A. County reboot of voting machine tech makes progress http://www.cafwd.org/reporting/entry-new/l.a.-county-project-to-reboot-voting-machine-tech-making-progress

September 15, 2015 - Group in Los Angeles working to develop new high-tech ballots http://www.wwmt.com/news/features/national/stories/Group-in-Los-Angeles-working-to-develop-new-high-tech-ballots-205340.shtml#.VI82idKrR9O

September 15, 2015 - Design firm tackles aging voting machines http://www.cbsnews.com/news/design-firm-tackles-aging-voting-machines/

September 15, 2015 - The Dismal State of America's Decade-Old Voting Machines — Wired http://www.wired.com/2015/09/dismal-state-americas-decade-old-voting-machines/

September 15, 2015 - Report: America's Aging Voting Machines Could Present Election Problems http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/09/15/440255752/report-americas-aging-voting-machines-could-present-election-problems

September 15, 2015 - America's Voting Technology Crisis http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/americas-voting-technology-crisis/405262/

September 15, 2015 - America's Voting Machines at Risk https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Americas\_Voting\_Machines\_At\_Risk.pdf

#### **VSAP Newsletter**

Attached to this report is the new issue of the VSAP Quarterly Newsletter which is produced to keep the VSAP Advisory Committee and VSAP Technical Advisory Committee updated on project developments. This newsletter provides milestones and status updates as the project progresses. In this issue you will find more details on the Vote By Mail user testing, committee activities, community engagement, and media coverage.

#### About the VSAP

Launched in September 2009, the Voting Systems Assessment Project (VSAP) was developed by the Department in response to the growing voting system needs and challenges faced by the County. While the County's current voting system has served the voters of Los Angeles County with accuracy and integrity, the design of these systems and the age of their technology do not offer the technical and functional elasticity necessary to continue to accommodate the growing and increasingly diverse electorate.

The size and diversity of Los Angeles County and the limited voting systems market, however, make it almost impossible to reasonably consider a commercial off-the-shelf voting system solution. Any voting system solution will entail a significant development or customization process in order to satisfy the County's needs, General Voting System Principles and technical requirements.

In response to these needs and challenges, the VSAP takes an unprecedented and comprehensive approach at modernizing the County's voting system. The vision of the project is to implement a voting system through a transparent process that takes into account the needs and expectations of current and future Los Angeles County voters. The VSAP aims at achieving three goals in this process: 1) give current and future Los Angeles County voters an unprecedented opportunity to participate in the assessment and development process; 2) increase voter confidence in the electoral process through the participatory structure of the project; 3) synthesize public input and research to acquire or develop a new voting system for the County.

#### **Stay Connected**

More information regarding the Voting System Assessment Project (VSAP) is available to the public online at www.lavote.net/vsap. The pages on our website are frequently updated with news and information and are a great way to stay connected with the progress of the project between quarterly reports. We strongly encourage public input throughout the process and look forward to continuing to work with your Board on this critical project.

If you have any questions please contact me directly or your staff may contact Jeramy Gray, Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk at (562) 462-2714 or via email at <a href="mailto:igray@rrcc.lacounty.gov">igray@rrcc.lacounty.gov</a>.



# VOTING SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

**Quarterly Newsletter** 

December 2015 Volume 1, Number 3

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- Message from Dean
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- Committee Updates
- Community Events
- Public Engagement
- In the News

# **CONTACT US**

http://lavote.net/vsap/newsroom

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#### **Kenneth Bennett**

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## **MESSAGE FROM DEAN**

s we approach the end of 2015, we take pride in the accomplishments achieved this year. We are progressing towards the final design of the Ballot Marking Device (BMD) and continue to define the tally system and other voting system components. The final design is a product of a design evolution, born as a result of extensive qualitative research to identify voters' preferences and address the needs of a large and complex electorate.



The final design brings us a step closer to delivering an outstanding public service to Los Angeles County voters. We envision a new and improved voting experience, one that will leave a positive mark on voters no matter how big or small the election. Ultimately, it is our goal to remind every eligible voter that the act of voting is not only a civic duty but also an exercise that effects changes in the community in which they live.

In this issue, we provide you with the VSAP activities and developments that have occurred in this quarter. We have conducted Vote By Mail user testing and a series of meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). We continued to engage stakeholders and the public through presentations and outreach activities. The project continues to gain national recognition. The VSAP was featured in various articles and television media coverage which highlighted project activities and goals.

DEAN C. LOGAN

Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk Los Angeles County Votes we retesting was conducted to evaluate the proposed VBM ballot and envelope design and to the new voting experience that will provide usability, satisfaction, and accessibility to users that is similar to the new voting experience being designed for in-person voting. The VSAP envisions a human-centered design that is sensitive to the needs of the Los Angeles County electorate who opt to vote by mail.

Approximately 1.5 million voters in the County are currently registered Permanent Vote By Mail voters.

In order to ensure a diverse pool of participants, representative of Los Angeles County's population, specific categories were identified to guide recruitment. These categories included: experienced Vote By Mail voters, new Vote By mail voters, senior citizens, young voters ages 18-25, Spanish speakers, Korean speakers, and people with minimal formal education. We reached out to our partner organizations and non-profit groups to ensure that all communities are well represented in this research. The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County, National Association of Latino Elected Officials Educational Fund (NALEO), United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA), and the Korean Resource Center (KRC) assisted in the recruitment of participants.

Participants received the proposed Vote By Mail packet and were scheduled for a 30-45 minute structured phone interview. Participants were asked to rate their experience on the following points: overall design including layout and font, size and length of the ballot, ease and efficiency (marking the ballot, looking for contests), privacy and anonymity of voting experience, and level of confidence in the new system to successfully record their votes. Participants also gave recommendations on how to improve the proposed design.



1,525,569 Total Permanent Vote by Mail Voters as of December 15, 2015

# November 20, 2015

To further BM ballot design, we requested members of United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLAP to test the proposed Vote By Mail design and give their recommendations. Individual interviews were conducted using a set of structured questions, and participants were asked to rate the experience on its usability and accessibility. In addition to the one-on-one interviews, we conducted a focus group with UCPLA members, where we gathered significant feedback.







Members of the UCPLA interacted with the proposed Vote By Mail ballot design



Focus Group Discussion with the members of UCPLA

The Department and IDEO are currently evaluating and analyzing the data gathered from the phone interviews. The data will be used to refine the proposed Vote By Mail design to accommodate the ideas and suggestions from the user testing.

A series of the Technical Advisory Committee and the IDEO team to further discuss the critical features and functions of the Ballot Marking Device (BMD). Among the topics were: ballot verification, session time-out, write-in candidates and the Interactive Sample Ballot (ISB).

The feedback from these discussions will significantly impact the decision making on the software and engineering aspects of the design. The members of the Technical Advisory Committee shared their expertise in election administration, election technology, and accessibility requirements. These discussions provided guidance to the VSAP team as we work towards the final voting system design.

# **New Advisory Committee Members**

The VSAP team is pleased to welcome two new members to the VSAP Advisory Committee. Both individuals have expertise and knowledge in election law and administration. They will provide input and guidance to ensure that the final system design adheres to the voting system principles.

# **Maria de la Luz Garcia**City Clerk City of Long Beach



Maria has been a voter engagement advocate and elections administrator for the past fifteen years. Under her leadership as Senior Project Coordinator at the City of Los Angeles City Clerk's Office, she supervised several

election operations, co-chaired the Department's Los Angeles Votes committee, and created and launched a comprehensive voter outreach and education campaign known as "L.A. City Votes!" in partnership with community organizations. Working for NALEO Educational Fund, she oversaw the Voces del Pueblo voter engagement program. Maria graduated from Vassar College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Anthropology, and is currently a Dean's Merit Scholar and candidate for Master of Public Administration at the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy.

#### Richard L. Hasen

Chancellor's Professor of Law and Political Science University of California, Irvine



Rick is a nationally recognized expert in election law and campaign finance regulation. He is the author of more

than 80 articles on election law issues, co-author of a leading casebook on election law, published in numerous journals including the Harvard Law Review, Stanford Law Review and Supreme Court Review. From 2001-2010, he served as founding co-editor of the quarterly peer-reviewed publication, Election Law Journal. He was elected to The American Law Institute in 2009 and serves as an Adviser on ALI's ongoing law reform project, Principles of Election Law: Resolution of Election Disputes. In 2013, he was named one of the 100 most influential lawyers in America by The National Law Journal. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (with highest honors) from UC Berkeley, and a J.D., M.A., and Ph.D. (Political Science) from UCLA.



# September 16, 2015

The VSAP reametrated the committee on the status of the project. Updates included a presentation of the latest BMD prototype, the findings from the May user testing sessions, and other project activities. The members were informed that the most recent reports are available on the VSAP website.

**Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) Meeting | September 29, 2015** 

The VSAP team presented the updated BMD prototype and discussed the results of the May user testing sessions. The members were also informed that the most recent reports may be accessed on the VSAP website. Requests from committee members for prototype demonstrations were noted and will be followed-up when the final design prototype is available.

# SXSW Eco in Austin, TX October 5, 2015

In a session titled "Creating the Voting Experience of the Future," the RR/CC and IDEO showed the collaboration between the two organizations and how technology and innovation is used to design the new voting system that will serve the large and complex LA County electorate.





Matt Adams (IDEO) and Dean Logan at the SXSW Eco.

# California Council of the Blind Prototype Demonstration | October 10, 2015

The VSAP team presented the current state of the project and conducted a demonstration of the audio features of the latest prototype model. The members of the organization interacted with the BMD prototype and provided their feedback.







The VSAP was invited to a meeting hosted by the NCSL to discuss election funding specifically for election-related technology. The RR/CC was represented by Monica Flores who shared the Department's experiences, challenges, and recommendations. The meeting was attended by approximately 15 legislators, professionals and experts in the field of election administration who all played an instrumental role in helping the NCSL shape a two-year program to address election funding concerns.

# Civic Tech Showcase in San Mateo, CA October 28, 2015

The VSAP was invited to conduct a presentation at the Civic Tech Showcase at Draper University. The showcase was coordinated by "Innovate Your State", a non-profit organization that is dedicated to educating and encouraging public participation to fundamentally improve government. The presentation's focus was on the unique partnership between the public and private sector.





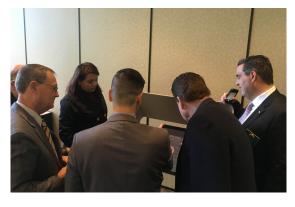


Blaise Bertrand (IDEO) and Dean Logan at the Civic Tech Showcase.

# **Kiwanis Club of Downey Presentation** | November 18, 2015

The VSAP team was invited by the Downey City Clerk's Office to give a project overview to the members of the Kiwanis Club of Downey. The VSAP team presented the appearance model and explained the process of the proposed new voting experience.





# C IN THE PROCESS

The VSAC COUNTY-Level and human-centered design which will provide an improved voting experience for Los Angeles County-Level sive qualitative research has been conducted throughout the course of the project to identify the needs and preferences of the diverse Los Angeles County electorate. To date, we have engaged over 3,000 voters, poll workers, and election administrators through surveys, focus groups, workshops, community discussions, and user testing to gather their feedback and input into the voting system design.

DATE	ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
March 11-29, 2010	Countywide Voter Survey - Phone	651
March 16-28, 2010	Countywide Voter Survey - Online	500
March 31 - April 2, 2010	Focus Groups - RR/CC Staff	64
April 5-6, 2010; April 29 - May 3, 2010	Focus Groups - Registered Voters	100
April 29 - June 8, 2010	Pollworker Survey - Online	1,100
May 7-11, 2010	Focus Groups - Local Election Officials, City Clerks	26
July 21, 2010	Community Discussion - Language Groups	9
August 11, 2010	Community Discussion - Voter Integrity Groups	9
September 20, 2010	Community Discussion - Disability Groups	6
January 24 - March 28, 2012	Open Innovation Challenge	154
January 25 - February 23, 2012	Brainstorming Workshops - AVTI	32
March 30, 2012	Election Verification Network (EVN) Conference Session	24
April 5-6, 2012	Brainstorming Workshops - RR/CC Staff	25
October 1-2, 2013	Atkins Research User Testing	40
November 4-5, 2013	User Testing	8
November 7, 2013	User Testing - United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA)	15
January 27 - February 1, 2014	Atkins Research Focus Groups	95
February 5, 2015	User Testing - General Population	5
February 27, 2015	User Testing - Spanish Speakers, Seniors	57
March 3 and 26, 2015	User Testing - Visually Impaired	5
April 29, 2015	User Testing - Election Workers	22
May 26-30, 2015	Polling Place Experience User Testing	184
November 9-20, 2015	Vote By Mail User Testing	76
November 20, 2015	Vote By Mail Focus Group - United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA)	10

**TOTAL** 3217



November 3, 2015 - Democracy for Everyone: Designing a Better Voting Machine

http://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2015-11-03/democracy-for-everyone-designing-a-better-voting-machine

October 12, 2015 - America's Aging Voting Machines

5/10/12/opinion/americas-aging-voting-machines.html?\_r=3

October 12, 2015 - LA County's \$13M touch-screen voting system gets previewed at Austin's SXSW http://www.scpr.org/news/2015/10/09/54919/la-county-s-voting-overhaul-gets-a-preview-in-aust/

October 2, 2015 - L.A. County reboot of voting machine tech makes progress

http://www.cafwd.org/reporting/entry-new/l.a.-county-project-to-reboot-voting-machine-tech-making-progress

September 15, 2015 - Group in Los Angeles working to develop new high-tech ballots

http://www.wwmt.com/news/features/national/stories/Group-in-Los-Angeles-working-to-develop-new-high-tech-ballots-205340.shtml#.Vl82idKrR9O

September 15, 2015 - The Dismal State of America's Decade-Old Voting Machines

http://www.wired.com/2015/09/dismal-state-americas-decade-old-voting-machines/

September 15, 2015 - Report: America's Aging Voting Machines Could Present Election Problems

http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/09/15/440255752/report-americas-aging-voting-machines-could-present-election-problems

September 15, 2015 - America's Voting Technology Crisis

http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/americas-voting-technology-crisis/405262/

September 15, 2015 - America's Voting Machines at Risk

https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Americas\_Voting\_Machines\_At\_Risk.pdf

September 15, 2015 - Design firm tackles aging voting machines

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/design-firm-tackles-aging-voting-machines/

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Get the latest updates and project developments by visiting the Voting System Assessment Project (VSAP) website at www.lavote.net /vsap. We strongly encourage public input throughout the process and look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical project.