



ANNUAL REPORT

2024

**OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER &
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS**

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
CLERK-RECORDER &
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS:**

Elaina Cano





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ELAINA CANO

County Clerk-Recorder & Registrar of Voters



When SLO County residents reflect on 2024, they no doubt think about the General Election that took place in the final quarter of the year—and rightly so. It was an important touchstone nationally as well as here in our local community. While memorable to most people for the final weeks leading up to and including November 5, the election was a primary focus of our department for most of the calendar year, and its successful execution in our county was the result of thousands of hours put in by hard-working Clerk-Recorder's Office staff.

Even before the General Election there was the Presidential Primary in March, which also unfolded successfully because of the tremendous dedication of SLO County staff and support from community volunteers. Though notable, these two major events were actually pieces of a much larger puzzle here in the Clerk-Recorder's Office. Throughout 2024, as we strove diligently to fulfill our obligations in election administration, our team also worked to perform an array of County Clerk and Recorder functions on behalf of residents from one end of the county to the other.

As we like to say, the Clerk-Recorder's Office is here to support the people of SLO County "from womb to tomb." We issue vital records documenting births, deaths, and marriages, and we record, index, and preserve public records that serve as historical back-up of life here in this place we're so lucky to call home. Even while conducting countywide elections, this work does not stop, and in fact we had our busiest recording month of the year—5,591 documents—in October, precisely when our Clerk-Recorder team was heavily involved in supporting the Elections Division during its most critical stretch.

We are a small but mighty and collaborative SLO County department. We work each day on behalf of our families, friends, and neighbors to ensure the highest level of service, and we appreciate this opportunity to share with you a recap of our most notable achievements during the year.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The County of San Luis Obispo Clerk-Recorder's Office is proud to present its first-ever Annual Report, covering calendar year 2024 and highlighting 12 months of service excellence and enhanced community engagement. Throughout the year, the office maintained its commitment to transparency, accessibility, and operational efficiency, serving as a vital resource for residents and businesses across the County.

Key Milestones & Achievements

Elections Administration

Successfully conducted the March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election and the November 5, 2024, General Election—ensuring smooth operations, secure voting processes, and timely certification of results.

Facilities Enhancement

Expanded and renovated the Elections Center to accommodate 1,100 square feet of added secure ballot storage space and acquired a new high-speed ballot tabulator.

Community Engagement

Launched a comprehensive, multi-pronged voter awareness program targeting all eligible residents through special events, mailings, public service announcements, social media outreach, and proactive media relations, among other things.

Voter Participation

Registered Voters
as of Nov 5, 2024



182,606

Voter Turnout



84.02%
November

52.34%
March

Percentage of
ballots cast by mail

November **92%**

March **94%**



Vital Records Issued

Birth Certificates: 4,352
Death Certificates: 1,009
Marriage Certificates: 2,509

SLO County Election Participation Rate

SLO County consistently
outperforms the
statewide
voter participation rate
by
4%-7%

SLO County outperformed
the November 2024
statewide
voter participation rate
by
12.59%

Official Documents Recorded

38,442
including property deeds,
liens, and other legal
documents

Marriages Recorded

1,490
with more than 275 civil
ceremonies performed
on site

Fictitious Business Names

2,616
including 2,549 FBNs filed,
65 abandonments, and
2 withdraw from
partnership

Community Outreach & Services

- **Educational Events Held:** 20+ voter education events, including Spanish-language workshops in partnership with Cal Poly faculty and students, and two candidate training events in collaboration with the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education
- **Key Informational Resources Developed:** More user-friendly departmental website, new social media accounts, redesigned County Voter Information Guide, and instructional video tools
- **New Services Launched:** Enhanced multilingual support for elections outreach and records requests, as well as a new outdoor marriage ceremony option and the first in a planned series of Pop-up Vitals events



DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

MISSION

In pursuit of a well-governed community, the County Clerk-Recorder will ensure the integrity of the election process and the records maintained by the office and provide access to these public records by complying with all applicable laws, employing technology to its fullest, and wisely spending the public funds entrusted to us while serving our customers with courteous and well-trained staff.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The County of San Luis Obispo Clerk-Recorder's Office plays a vital role in ensuring transparency, accessibility, and accuracy in government processes and public records. The office serves as a hub for administrative, electoral, and recordkeeping functions, maintaining the integrity of essential services for the County's more than 280,000 residents.

The office is responsible for managing and safeguarding a wide array of public records and administrative functions. Its operations are rooted in providing equitable and transparent services to residents, businesses, and government entities.



OFFICIAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The office oversees the recording and preservation of official documents and records that are vital to the county's historical, legal, and economic framework. These include deeds, mortgages, liens, and other property-related records, and the office ensures these documents are accessible to the public while maintaining their integrity and confidentiality where required.

VITAL RECORDS

The office is woven into the fabric of residents' lives from their earliest days by issuing and maintaining certified copies of vital records such as birth, death, and marriage certificates. It is also responsible for processing applications for marriage licenses and officiating civil marriage ceremonies, further contributing to the community's personal milestones.

ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION

One of the most visible roles of the Clerk-Recorder's Office is its responsibility for conducting free, fair, and transparent elections countywide. Some of the steps to this end include:

- Managing voter registration and maintaining an up-to-date voter roll.
- Coordinating polling places, ballot development and distribution, and the recruitment, training, and deployment of poll workers.
- Ensuring compliance with local, state, and federal election laws.
- Certifying accurate election results to uphold democratic processes.

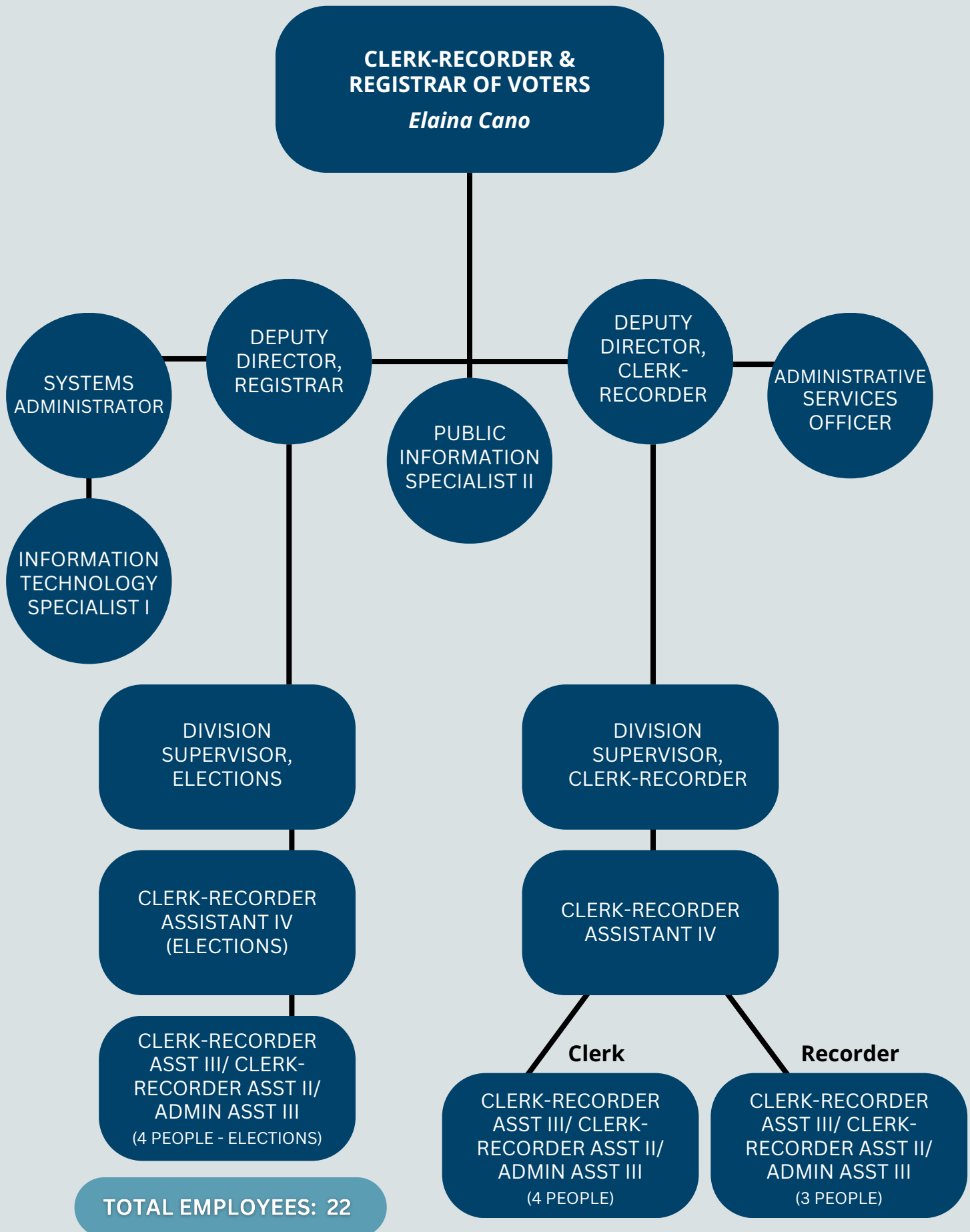
COUNTY CLERK SERVICES

The office provides essential services such as filing fictitious business name statements as well as registering notary publics, process servers, legal document assistants, unlawful detainers, and professional photocopiers. It also administers oaths of office for public officials, ensuring compliance with legal mandates.

PUBLIC ACCESS & TRANSPARENCY

The Clerk-Recorder's Office is dedicated to facilitating public access to information while protecting sensitive data. It diligently manages requests for public records and ensures compliance with California's Public Records Act, fostering both accountability and trust in the County's local government.

CLERK-RECORDER'S OFFICE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



TOTAL EMPLOYEES: 22

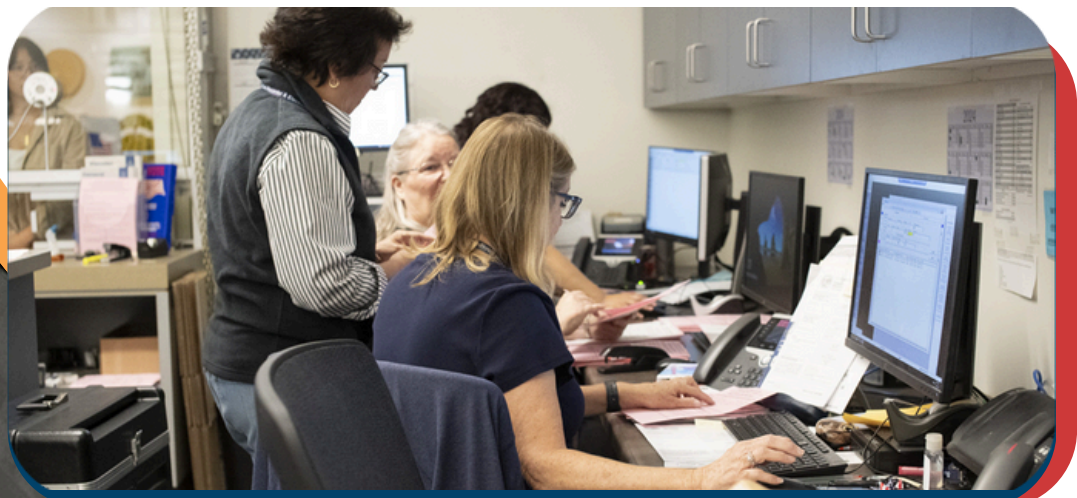


ELECTIONS DIVISION

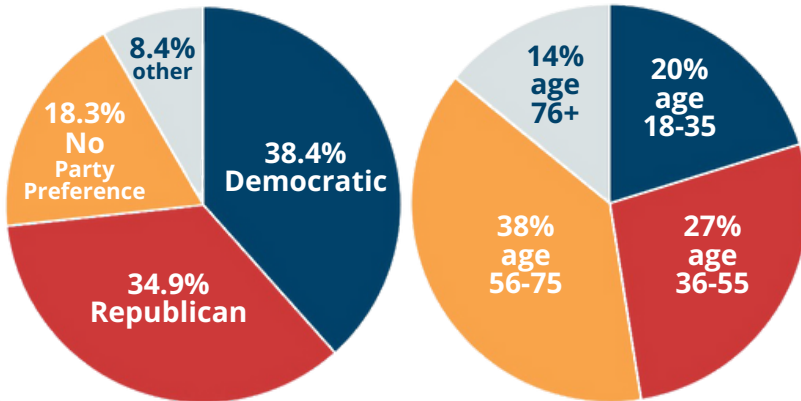
OVERVIEW OF ELECTIONS IN 2024

The Elections Division of the Clerk-Recorder's Office oversaw two major elections in 2024: the California Primary Election in March and the Presidential General Election in November. These elections presented opportunities for the County's more than 182,000 registered voters to shape the County's future through their participation in federal, state, and local races, ballot measures, and propositions.

Faced with an uptick in misinformation and skepticism compared to previous presidential election cycles, the Division's team of seven full-time staff and approximately two dozen temporary employees spearheaded significant logistical and operational efforts that began well before January 2024 and continued through the General Election canvass and certification on December 3. Their work, and that of 600+ trained poll workers and Election Night staff, ensured that every eligible voter was able to cast a ballot in each election and that all results were tabulated in a legal, timely, and transparent manner. In both March and November, **SLO County's voter turnout was among the highest statewide**—the result of a perennially engaged local electorate and the Clerk-Recorder's Office's robust voter awareness efforts.



As of the General Election, SLO County had **182,606 registered voters**, reflecting a 3% increase from the March 2024 Primary Election cycle.



PARTICIPATION IN THE NOVEMBER 4, 2024 GENERAL ELECTION

ACROSS THE COUNTY

District 1	80.42% of 36,552
District 2	89% of 32,473
District 3	84.91% of 39,440
District 4	82.12% of 39,647
District 5	84.34% of 34,494

Percent of registered voters

Voting at All Ages

- In 2024, **560 high school students** registered or pre-registered to vote through the Election Division's first-ever countywide competition, and hundreds of additional students registered/pre-registered through other campus-based voter registration efforts.
- During the November General Election, **1,766 18-year-olds** and **2,045 19-year-olds** voted—most for the very first time.
- The oldest SLO County voter in the November General Election was **109 years old**.

Above and Beyond in November 2024

While SLO County consistently outperforms the statewide turnout rate by 4-7%, local voters stepped up during the 2024 General Election, demonstrating a turnout rate **12.59% higher than the statewide average**.

Vote-by-Mail

92%
of ballots were cast by mail or VBM drop-off

In-Person Voting

8%
of voters opted for in-person voting

VBM on Election Day

27%
of voters dropped off their VBM ballot at a poll or dropbox on Election Day

Remote Accessible VBM

37
voters cast their ballot by Remote Accessible VBM

Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) and Provisional Ballots

During the General Election cycle, the Elections Division processed **1,043 CVR registrations**—that is, registrations submitted in person after the close of registration, which 15 days prior to the election—and **4,397 provisional ballots**, which are cast when poll workers are unable to confirm a voter's eligibility on Election Day. Each of these required staff research to confirm validity prior to counting. This state-mandated process, while time-consuming, ensures that eligible voters had every opportunity to cast their vote.

SLO Compared to Other California Counties

For the General Election, the County of San Luis Obispo's turnout rate of 84.02% far exceeded the state average of 71.43%, placing the county in the **top 8% of California counties** for voter engagement (i.e., turnout among registered voters). Only Marin County had a comparable number of registered voters (172,385); the other three counties with higher turnout had 26,488, 135,300, and 10,807 registered voters, respectively.

UOCAVA

Civilian Overseas Voters: 700
Military Overseas Voters: 15
Military Domestic Voters: 29

INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS IN ELECTIONS PROCESSES

Facility Renovations and Equipment Upgrades

As soon as the March 2024 Primary Election canvass was complete in April, work began on a total renovation of the Elections Center within the County Government Center on Monterey Street in downtown San Luis Obispo. The space was emptied and gutted down to the studs, and walls were knocked out and reconfigured to absorb 1,100 additional square feet acquired from the former Human Resources annex.

Over the course of the summer, the County's Public Works Department worked diligently to create a reimagined Elections Center, which consolidated all Elections operations (outside of the off-site warehouse) into one publicly observable space. Additional enhancements included a distinct, self-contained area for candidate filing appointments and security measures like safety glass. Just after Labor Day, staff moved equipment and supplies back into the Election Center and readied it for General Election activities.

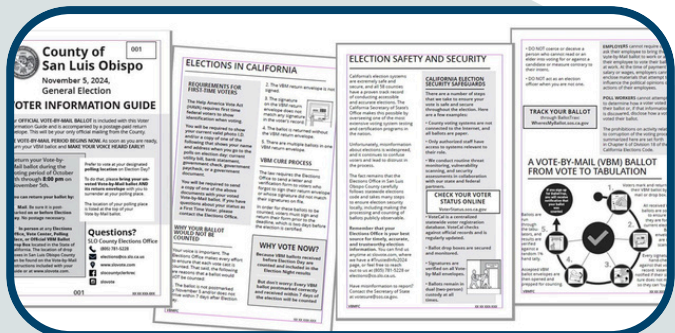
Among the equipment moved in were two new mobile ballot printers that could accommodate larger ballot formats, as well as the HiPro high-speed ballot-counting machine that the Clerk-Recorder's Office purchased using grant funding during Summer 2024. The HiPro replaced three separate smaller ballot tabulators and greatly increased the speed and efficiency with which staff could count votes. As with all certified tabulation equipment, it is not connected to the Internet and sends results to an air-gapped system for storage and compilation.



Updated County Voter Information Guide

In between the March Primary and the November General, Clerk-Recorder's Office staff completely redesigned the printed County Voter Information Guide, a publication that is customized to include candidate statements for each ballot type in a given election (there were 75 ballot types in the November 2024 General) and mailed to every registered voter for receipt 29 days prior to an election.

The redesigned Voter Information Guide included a more user-friendly layout and enhanced content that dove into the subject of elections security and the specific steps taken to process a Vote-by-Mail ballot.

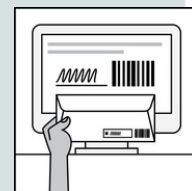


FIVE STEPS TO COUNTING VBM VOTES

VOTE-BY-MAIL PROCESSING

1

SORTING & SIGNATURE VERIFICATION



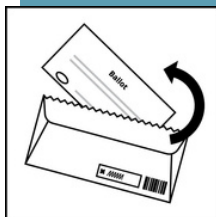
- 1) Returned Vote-by-Mail ballot envelopes are scanned on a sorter that endorses the envelope. Envelopes that are unable to be read are sorted out and handled manually.
- 2) Scanned envelopes are stored unopened in trays until they are verified.
- 3) All scanned envelope images are imported into the Election Management System, where staff trained on the criteria in state regulations for verifying signatures review the signatures to determine if they match each voter's signature on file.
- 4) If the staff determines the signatures do not match, the ballot envelope will be challenged as "In-Review."
- 5) Any ballot envelopes flagged as "In-Review" will be provided to a supervisor for further inspection. If it is still determined that the signature does not match, the challenge code will be updated to "Sig Non Match" and the Elections Office will reach out to the voter, who will then have until 5:00 pm two days prior to the certification of the election to submit a **Signature Verification Statement**. If a Signature Verification Statement is received by that deadline with a matching signature, then the ballot will be counted.

If a voter fails to sign their ballot return envelope at all, a challenge code of "No Signature" will be entered, and the voter will be contacted to complete an **Unsigned Ballot Statement**, which must be returned to the Elections Office no later than 5:00 pm two days prior to the certification of the election.

Ballot envelopes requiring either statement will remain challenged with the appropriate status until the curing statement has been received by the Elections Office, at which point the ballot disposition is changed to "Good." If no curing statement is returned, the ballot envelope status will remain challenged.

2

EXTRACTION



"Good" ballot envelopes are run through the envelope openers before the enclosed ballots are manually extracted by batch.

The emptied envelopes are boxed for storage, and the ballots are kept in their tray to be examined for damage and prepared for counting.

3

FLATTENING & INSPECTION

A batch of ballots is given to a staff member who inspects the ballots for any tears, identifying marks such as signatures or initials, red ink, and pencil. The staff member also flattens the ballot by back-bending each ballot at the folds and faces all ballots the same direction.

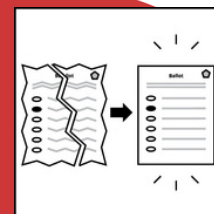
Ballots are counted and stacked in bundles of 50. Any that need to be remade so that they can be read by the tabulator are given to the lead staff and "good" ballots that have already been remade are added to keep the batch at 50.

4

REMAKING BALLOTS (DUPLICATION)

Three staff members participate as the Duplication Board. One board member holds the original ballot and calls out every vote that the voter had marked. Another board member marks the same vote choice on a "new" ballot.

The final board member observes the original vote that was called and the corresponding "new" vote choice that is made to ensure that they match. These ballots are then bundled in batches of 50 and prepared for tabulation.



5

TABULATION & ADJUDICATION

Ballots are run through the tabulators in batches of 200 (4 stacks of 50). Any ballots that are rejected by the tabulation scanner are replaced with a ballot from those that have been remade, so that the batch remains at 200. After successfully running through the tabulator, ballots are boxed in sets of 800. The batch and box numbers are recorded in and on the outside of each box, and each box is sealed with a tamper-evident seal for storage.

Any ballots flagged by the scanners as "irregular" (e.g., include stray marks, over- or under-votes, etc.) are displayed on multiple screens and adjudicated by teams of two Elections staff, who must agree on the voter's intent.

VOTER EDUCATION EFFORTS

Video Resources

During the summer and fall, the Elections Division produced a series of short-format videos covering several important voting-related topics and shared these educational videos with County residents via the YouTube channel @SLOClerkRecorder.

Topics covered in the videos included Q&As with the Clerk-Recorder, a breakdown of the two different contests for California Senator, how to cast a Vote-by-Mail ballot, and how to use the ICX ballot marking device.

Additionally, the staff worked with representatives from the County Jail to develop and produce print and video materials to educate inmates about their voting rights and steps necessary to vote locally while incarcerated or upon release.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in English and Spanish

Another component of voter outreach and education during the two election cycles of 2024 was a new public service message campaign. The Clerk-Recorder's Office produced a series of prerecorded 30-second radio and television spots; prior to and during the official Vote-by-Mail periods, these messages aired locally thanks to pro bono support from American General Media and KSBY. The spots highlighted key deadlines, voting options, and the importance of civic participation.

Additional support was provided on Spanish-language radio by on-air host and County employee Laura Zarate, who shared election details with the audience of her weekly show.

CANDIDATE TRAINING EVENTS

The Clerk-Recorder's Office collaborated with the County Office of Education to conduct candidate training events in June and August.

These events, hosted by the COE for individuals interested in running for any of the local school boards but open as well to those running for community services districts or special districts, allowed the Clerk-Recorder and her staff to share critical information about timing, processes, and forms required to run for office.



The Elections Division continues to prioritize innovation, accessibility, and engagement. By addressing the unique needs of San Luis Obispo County residents and implementing significant operational improvements, the Division reinforced public trust and participation in the democratic process.

STANDARD ELECTION TIMELINE

Always On-Going

Voter Rolls:

Update voter registration database continually through communication with state and local agencies as well as individual voters.

Customer Service:

Maintain phone, email, and in-person customer service channels so that voters can get timely answers to questions.

12+ Months Before the Election

• Planning and Budgeting:

Begin planning for the upcoming election, including developing a budget for all election-related expenses.

• Review of Election Laws:

Begin review of any new election laws or regulations that may affect the upcoming election.

Attend training sessions and workshops to stay updated.

• Voter Registration:

Encourage new and updated voter registration through targeted messaging and outreach.

10-11 Months Before the Election

• Vendor Contracts:

Review and renew contracts with vendors for election supplies, voting systems, and services like ballot printing and mailing.

• Staffing Needs:

Assess staffing requirements and begin recruitment for temporary election workers and poll workers.



8-9 Months Before the Election

• Polling Place Assessment:

Identify and assess potential polling places for accessibility and suitability.

Begin contacting property owners for use agreements.

• Outreach and Education:

Start planning voter outreach and education efforts, including for underrepresented communities.



4-5 Months Before the Election

• Statewide Database Updates:

Update local voter records, ensuring they are accurate and reflect any recent changes. Provide required Reports of Registration (ROR) to California Secretary of State (SOS).

• Precinct Consolidations:

Evaluate voter registration totals and begin to group precincts into polling place locations.

• Notice(s) of Election:

Place advertisements in media throughout the county to publicize open contests.

• Candidate Filing:

Publicize the filing period and meet with candidates who submit paperwork to qualify for the ballot.

• Voter Information Guide:

Prepare and review the first sections of the County Voter Information Guide that will be mailed to all registered voters, including text of measures that will be on the ballot.

3 Months Before the Election

• Ballot Design and Proofing:

Begin designing and proofing ballots. This includes candidate names and designations, propositions, and any other measures on the ballot.

• Final Polling Place Selection:

Finalize the list of polling places and ensure all logistical arrangements are in place.

• Public Testing of Voting Equipment:

Conduct public testing of voting equipment to ensure accuracy and reliability.

• Polling Place Materials:

Update forms, certificates, and other polling place materials and begin ordering and compiling supplies.

6-7 Months Before the Election

• Training Programs:

Develop training programs for election staff, poll workers, and volunteers.

• Media Relations:

Host media partners at the Elections Center to review with them what will be on the upcoming ballot.



2 Months Before the Election

- **Voter Information Guide:**
Format and proof candidate statements that are included in the guide.
- **Poll Worker Recruitment:**
Schedule poll workers and recruit to fill vacancies around the county.
- **Military and Overseas Outreach:**
Mail ballots to all registered military and overseas voters.
- **Mail Ballot Preparation:**
Prepare and organize Vote-by-Mail ballots for distribution.

Coordinate with the post office for timely delivery.
- **Accessibility:**
Create and post online accessible versions of the County Voter Information Guide for each ballot type.

1 Month Before the Election

- **Mail Ballot Distribution:**
Send a Vote-by-Mail ballot and County Voter Information Guide to every registered voter.
- **Voter Registration Deadline:**
Promote the voter registration deadline, processing new registrations and updating records as necessary.
- **Poll Worker Training:**
Conduct training sessions for poll workers and election staff, covering all aspects of election day procedures.
- **Pre-Election Logic and Accuracy Testing:**
Perform publicly observable final testing on all voting equipment to demonstrate accuracy of tabulation results.
- **Elections Office Access:**
Open both Elections Offices Monday through Friday for in-person voting and ballot drop-off. Ensure that the media publishes dates and hours of all publicly observable processes.
- **Drop Boxes:**
Facilitate access to secure drop boxes throughout the county for ballot drop-off.
- **Vote-by-Mail Tabulation:**
Begin counting Vote-by-Mail ballots that arrive at the Elections Center via mail and drop box.

2 Weeks Before the Election

- **Polling Place Preparation:**
Create precinct rosters for confirming voter status at polling locations.
- **Warehouse Preparation:**
Organize supply tubs for all precincts with the necessary equipment, signage, and materials.
- **Tub Pick-up:**
Coordinate pick-up of supply tubs from the warehouse by all Precinct Inspectors.
- **Make-up Training:**
Conduct make-up training sessions and meet with Precinct Assistants and other temporary staff.
- **Transportation and Security:**
Secure additional vehicles for supplies and ballot transportation on Election Day and coordinate security measures with local law enforcement.

ELECTION DAY

- **Polling Place Operations:**
Manage and troubleshoot operations at all polling places, ensuring everything runs smoothly.
- **Voter Assistance:**
Provide support to voters and poll workers, addressing any issues or concerns that arise.
- **Ballot Collection:**
Ensure all ballots are securely collected from polling places and drop boxes.

Confirm delivery of ballots to the Elections Center and organize ballots and supplies when received.
- **Election Night Count:**
Conduct Election Night count of all poll ballots and publish preliminary unofficial results.

Post-Election 30-Day Canvass

- **Ballot Counting:**
Oversee the counting of all ballots, including mail, provisional, and damaged ballots that need duplication.
- **Adjudication:**
Review ballots flagged as potentially having overvotes or write-ins to assess validity of votes cast.
- **Public Updates:**
Post and share count updates as ballots are tabulated.
- **Audit and Reconciliation:**
Conduct audits and reconcile ballot counts to ensure accuracy, including a manual tally of 1% of precincts and ballot types to compare against the machine count.
- **Certification:**
Certify the election results and report them to the Secretary of State.



Conclusion of the Canvass

- **Post-Election Review:**
Review the entire election process to identify areas for improvement in future elections.
- **Communication:**
Share information with SLO County voters regarding the accuracy and transparency of the election.
- **Wrap-up:**
Close out contracts, finalize payments, and ensure all temporary staff are off-boarded.
- **Implementation:**
Deploy new strategies and practices based on lessons learned.



COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER DIVISION

The County of San Luis Obispo consolidates the functions of both the County Clerk and the Recorder, managing a variety of essential public services within one Division of the Office of the Clerk-Recorder. Clerk-Recorder staff interface with the public daily, assisting community members in filing and accessing critical documentation efficiently and securely.

Among the core responsibilities of the Clerk-Recorder Division are issuing and maintaining vital records, including marriage licenses, and performing civil marriage ceremonies in both English and Spanish.

The Clerk-Recorder's Office also plays a key role in maintaining the integrity of local business operations and environmental protections. One key service provided is the registration of fictitious business names. This process, often referred to as a "doing business as" (DBA) registration, ensures that the public has access to important information about who is behind a business. Registering a fictitious business name also helps individuals or entities operating under a name other than their own legal name prevent fraud and provides legal clarity in transactions.

Another function the office serves is to accept, verify, document, and publicly open bids for projects that will be funded by the County, ensuring fairness and transparency in the process of awarding vendor contracts.

The Clerk-Recorder's Office is also responsible for receiving and posting environmental filings required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). These filings include notices of determinations, negative declarations, and environmental impact reports, all of which are crucial for public awareness and accountability. CEQA mandates these filings to ensure that any project or development that may significantly affect the environment undergoes appropriate review. Posting these documents allows the public to access relevant information about potential environmental impacts, ensuring that decision-makers and citizens are informed and able to participate in the environmental review process. This transparency upholds the principles of environmental stewardship and public engagement, ensuring that development aligns with sustainability goals while minimizing adverse impacts on local ecosystems.



COUNTY CLERK RESPONSIBILITIES:

Vital Records Management

- Issues and maintains records of births, deaths, and marriages occurring within the county

Marriage Services

- Issues public and confidential licenses
- Deputizes Marriage Commissioners for a Day
- Conducts civil marriage ceremonies

Business Filings

- Files fictitious business name statements

Professional Registrations

- Registers notary public commissions, process servers, legal document assistants, unlawful detainers, and professional photocopiers
- Manages oaths of office

RECORDER RESPONSIBILITIES:

Official Records Management

- Records and maintains documents related to real property, such as deeds, mortgages, liens, and maps going back to 1850
- Provides access to these records through an online self-service portal

Public Access Services

- Offers copies of recorded documents to the public, ensuring transparency and accessibility

Restrictive Covenant Modifications

- Processes requests to modify property documents containing unlawful discriminatory covenants, in compliance with state laws

Customer Service Highlights

Total Number of Documents Recorded: 38,442

Total Number of Copies Issued: 7,870

Official Record Copies Issued: 5,594

Number of Pages Filmed or Scanned: 182,519

Number of Grantors & Grantees Indexed: 157,467

Number of Marriages Recorded: 1,490 (1,347 public and 143 confidential)

Number of Ceremonies Performed: More than 275

Number of Commissioners of Civil Marriages Deputized: 156

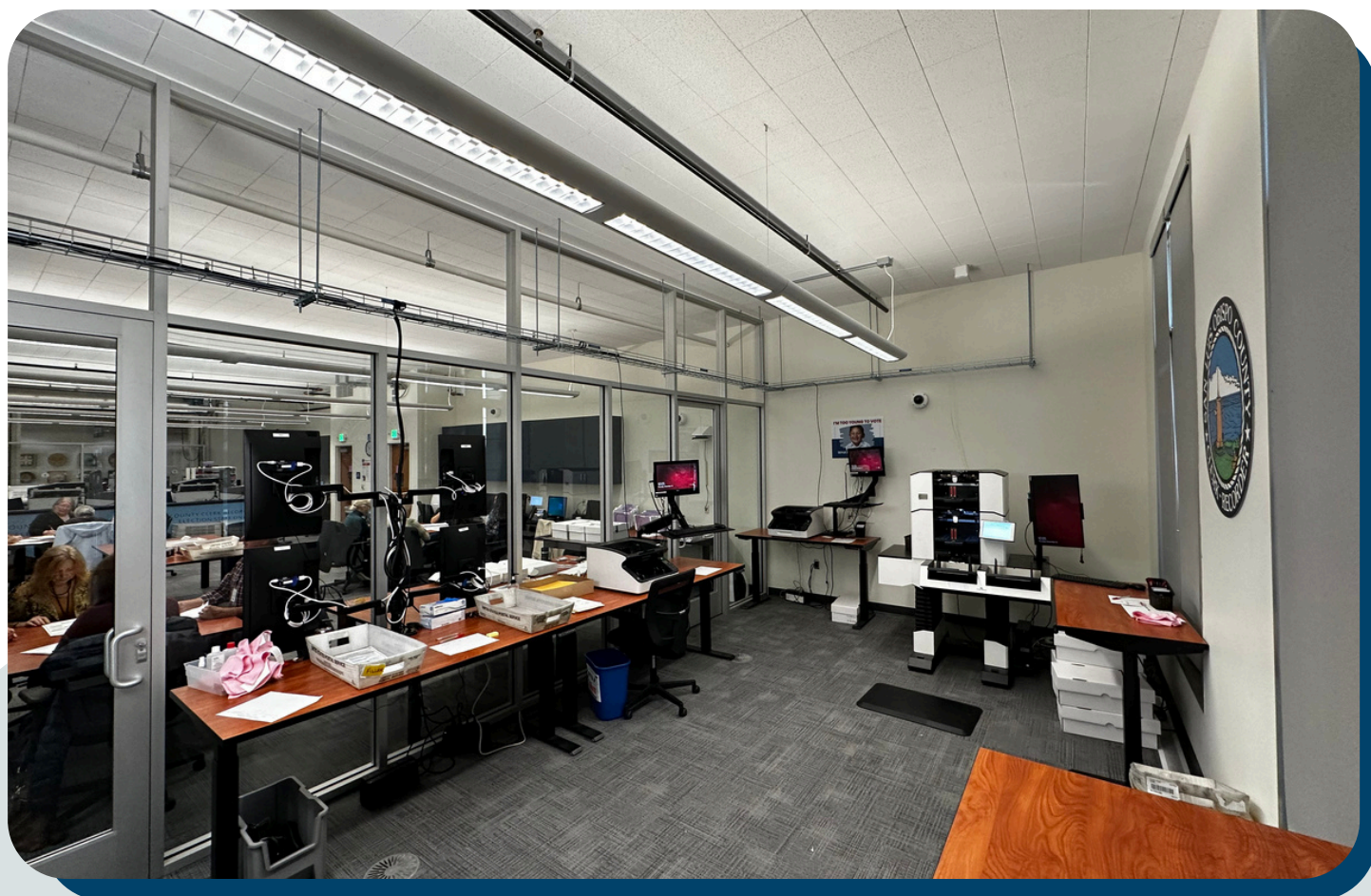
Number of Fish and Wildlife Documents Issued: 290

Number of Maps Recorded: 199
(5 Assessment, 18 Parcel, 9 Subdivision/Tract, 167 License/Record Survey)

Number of Notary Professional Registrations: 26

Number of Fictitious Business Names Filed: 2,616
(2,549 filings, 65 abandonments, and 2 withdraw from partnership)

Number of Bid Opening Events: 26





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During 2024, the Clerk-Recorder's Office sharpened focus on community outreach and engagement and, to that end, launched several new programs and initiatives.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO INFORMATION & RESOURCES

These efforts began with a user-centered redesign of the departmental website, working within the framework of the County system but incorporating Clerk-Recorder branding, tools, and resources to facilitate easier community access to key information. This project extended to a relaunch of departmental social media accounts as well, where staff developed and maintained an authentic and trustworthy voice across platforms and built reach through regular engagement with followers. Social media posts were also expanded to include Spanish translations whenever possible.

Additionally, the department developed several short-form instructional videos that were deployed across the website and social accounts to provide information and instruction and serve as an on-going resource library via the Clerk-Recorder YouTube channel @SLOClerkRecorder.

Photo courtesy of
Stanley Yucikas

PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND BUSINESSES

Partnerships with other organizations bolstered efforts to reach out to new audiences throughout the year. The **League of Women Voters** provided invaluable support, most importantly by cosponsoring and leading campus presentations during the first-ever **Countywide High School Voter Registration Drive**, through which 560 students were registered (or pre-registered, if aged 16 or 17) to vote. The inaugural competition culminated in the naming of Morro Bay High School the 2024 Voter Registration Champion, recognition that earned both print and broadcast media coverage.

The media also helped to promote and then celebrate the winners of the Clerk-Recorder's first **"I Voted" sticker design contest**. Open to students in third through twelfth grades, the competition generated entries from throughout the county, which were judged anonymously by local mayors. Students from three different schools achieved the top honors and, after they were recognized through in-person visits from the Clerk-Recorder, saw their designs printed and distributed to voters at the Elections Offices and polling locations during the November General Election.

Cuesta College and **Cal Poly** served as important partners in community outreach efforts as well. Cuesta hosted Clerk-Recorder's Office staff at a tabling event on National Voter Registration Day and worked to promote student participation in the California Secretary of State's collegiate Ballot Bowl. Cal Poly also participated in the Ballot Bowl, earning recognition as having registered the Highest Percentage of Students among CSUs; in addition, the university's Political Science department provided the opportunity for

staff to present in class, and Journalism faculty brought a class to the Elections Center to learn first-hand about the processes on which they'd be reporting.

Most notably, a group of Cal Poly faculty and students also worked for several months with the Clerk-Recorder's Office to develop the **Latino Voter Engagement Project**, a voter education program specifically geared for Spanish-speaking community members. After months of meetings with community leaders and stakeholders to develop appropriate messaging, the team planned and staged six events at library branches throughout the County, bringing bilingual Clerk-Recorder staff directly to residents where they live to share details about the who, what, when, where, and why of elections. The series of bilingual engagement events received local broadcast and print news coverage and will be a model for future outreach by the Clerk-Recorder's Office to underrepresented county residents in 2025 and beyond.

Throughout the year, the Clerk-Recorder herself travelled around the county and made **in-person presentations** to business representatives (SLO Chamber of Commerce's "Good Morning SLO," Leadership North County), service organizations, (Rotary, RAMs), and seniors (facilities in Oceano, SLO, Paso Robles; Cal Poly retired faculty). In all, the Clerk-Recorder and/or staff participated in more than 20 community outreach events during 2024. Upon completion of the renovated Elections Center, these events grew to include guided tours for all ages, from retirees on down to local Girl Scouts.



VOTER AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Noteworthy programs launched during the 2024 election cycles included Media Day and the “Too Young to Vote” project.

On **Media Day**, the Clerk-Recorder brought reporters from outlets around the county to the Government Center to learn about the upcoming election, including key dates, what would be on the ballot, and possible story angles. This effort, which further established the Clerk-Recorder’s Office as the most credible source of local elections information, ultimately led to numerous elections-related stories and strengthened relationships with media partners.

The **“Too Young to Vote” yard sign campaign** involved eight local children who posed for photos that were incorporated into non-partisan yard signs which featured the message: “I’m too young to vote. What’s your excuse?” With support from KSBY and the League of Women Voters, these signs were publicized and distributed throughout the county during the two weeks before the General Election. Because of its evergreen nature, the Clerk-Recorder’s Office plans to revisit the campaign and reintroduce the signs during future election cycles.



ENHANCED SERVICES

Within the Clerk-Recorder Division, staff worked to enhance both the efficiency and quality of services offered. Two important examples of this included the first of a planned series of **Pop-up Vitals events** and a **new rooftop option for civil marriage ceremonies**.

In June, community members had their first opportunity to obtain copies of vital records in the North County and outside of regular business hours. For four hours on a Saturday, the Clerk-Recorder’s satellite office on the second floor of the Atascadero Library was open, staffed, and able to produce official copies of birth, death, and marriage certificates.

The rooftop wedding service also debuted over the summer. Making use of the fourth floor deck off of the Supervisors’ offices in the Government Center, civil ceremony officiants were able to provide a breath of fresh air, quite literally, to couples as they said their “I do’s” overlooking downtown SLO.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Across the country, election security was top-of-mind in 2024, though this meant different things to different people. Within the Clerk-Recorder's Office, processes guaranteeing security and accuracy had always been critical, but this new era brought with it increased scrutiny and, unfortunately, a level of distrust among some in the community.

The Clerk-Recorder's Office rose to the challenge in a number of ways. The renovations to the Elections Center shored up physical security for both ballots and staff. While the center did not gain much square footage for observers, all Vote-by-Mail activities were consolidated in the renovated space, allowing visitors to witness each step in the signature checking, opening, processing, duplicating (when needed due to stray marks, etc.), tabulating, adjudicating, and auditing of ballots cast.

The Clerk-Recorder's Office also placed new emphasis on communicating regularly with voters through a variety of channels. From increasing personal visits and educational presentations to generating newsworthy media content, instructional videos, and a more robust online presence, the office strove to provide comprehensive, understandable, and accessible elections information, all while underscoring that local elections offices are the best source of reliable elections information.



The bulk of this work was done while facing another significant challenge: limited staffing. The Clerk-Recorder's Office is relatively small for a county of San Luis Obispo's size, and the ratio of Elections staff to registered voters was 1 to more than 26,000. Two staff members from the Clerk-Recorder Division worked alongside the Elections staff for the month before and after each election, and the rest of the Clerk-Recorder Division was pulled into specific tasks along the way. Additionally, an invaluable group of temporary employees worked hundreds of hours to supplement these efforts. The fact remained, however, that the available manpower was limited—especially in the face of a General Election that generated more than 150,000 voted mail ballots, each requiring all of the steps outlined on page 10 of this report.

Despite these challenges, each election was executed professionally and certified on time, and customer service on the Clerk-Recorder side remained uninterrupted and attuned to the community's needs. The challenges also point the way to specific opportunities going forward.

LOOKING AHEAD

The department will take steps during 2025 to introduce new technology to the elections process, specifically in the form of e-pollbooks, which have the potential to completely overhaul voters' Election Day experience and streamline processes for both voters and poll workers. E-pollbooks eliminate the need for polling place paperwork, including voter rosters, and allow poll workers to have confirm voters' eligibility in real time.

The Clerk-Recorder will also evaluate the efficacy of moving to a vote center model from the current status of traditional polling places. Unlike the county's current polling places, which are only open on Election Day and provide only

the ballot type for the assigned precinct(s), vote centers open several days before an election and can serve voters from anywhere in the county. With more than 93% of all voters casting their ballot by mail in 2024, and with a historical record of ever dwindling in-person voting, San Luis Obispo County could benefit operationally and financially in the long-term from such a move.

Another potential opportunity is the education of community members through the development of an Election Academy. Currently envisioned as a series of on-site classes that walk through the details of election administration, this type of program could equip interested individuals with the knowledge needed to share factual information with colleagues, friends, and neighbors and could serve as yet another tool in the effort to combat mis- and dis-information.

Lastly, the Clerk-Recorder Division is exploring a number of service enhancements, including additional pop-up events and partnering with the County Parks and Recreation department to create "destination" civil marriage ceremonies beyond the Government Center. In 2025, the Division will also make additional strides in implementing AB 1466, which mandates the removal of restrictive and discriminatory covenant language from official documents.

As the department moves forward, it is with an eye on its core principles of transparency, accessibility, and operational efficiency as well as continual elevation of customer service outcomes.





THANK YOU

The Clerk-Recorder's Office maintains a fundamental commitment to customer service, transparency, and access. Whether we assist you with your document needs or welcome you into the Elections Center to learn about our facility, we look forward to supporting you in 2025 and beyond.

CONTACT US:



(805) 781-5080



elections@co.slo.ca.us



www.slovote.com



1055 Monterey Street, Suite D-120
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

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