

Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee
Endorsement Questionnaire for Fresno County Clerk Candidates

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Please limit your responses to no more than 300 words per question.

- 1) What measures would you take to increase voter turnout?
- 2) Will you conduct an early vote program in the southern parts of the city and in rural areas?
- 3) Will you set up on site voting at the Fresno County Jail?
- 4) What measures will you take in increasing voter registration?
- 5) Will you set up a program to register high school and college students about voting?
- 6) What other programs would you institute to register young people to vote?
- 7) How would you use the social media to increase voter registration and turnout?
- 8) What measures would you take to insure the integrity of the election?
- 9) What measures would you take to insure that potential voters are treated fairly and honestly at the polling sites?

Thank you so much for your time and energy in completing this questionnaire. Your answers will be distributed to our members prior to our March endorsement meeting through the CVPPAC Web site.

Please see my responses in attached file.

Fresno County Clerk Brandi L. Orth's responses to
Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee questionnaire
April 9, 2018

1. What measures would you take to increase voter turnout?

Since being appointed as the Fresno County Clerk in 2012, I have encouraged voter participation through a variety of ways. My efforts have been to provide voters additional information about the election process, while making it easier for voters to participate and get information.

Voters have very busy schedules, but the fresnovote.com website contains a wealth of information. Voters can also access the website through mobile devices. It provides the voter their polling location, if their vote-by-mail ballot has been mailed to them, if the elections office has received it back, an electronic version of their county voter information guide and the districts in which they reside. I also established 10 drive-through voted ballot drop off locations, throughout the county for voter ease of dropping off their voted ballots on election day. I also installed a secure steel drop off box in front of the office for voters to return their voted ballots 24/7. My office continues to supply voter registration cards to all post offices, libraries and community groups.

The County Voter Information Guide continues to provide the voter information about important election processes, such as the Top Two Primary, party ballot information in Presidential Primary elections, how to vote and utilize the voting equipment, what the process is when you appear to vote at a polling location, and more.

I regularly write opinion editorials for the Fresno Bee alerting voters to changes in the law, and providing more election information. During my many presentations to community groups I emphasize the importance of voting. How, in many cases, one vote makes a difference. I explain that the outcome of many local races have a direct effect on their lives. I also reiterate the sacrifice that many Americans made to preserve the country's right to vote.

2. Will you conduct an early vote program in the southern parts of the city and in rural areas?

When I was appointed to the position in 2012, I immediately accessed the need for polling locations in the southern part of the city. Through this process I engaged community members and compared voting locations to bus routes. I immediately increased the number of polling locations to serve the southern parts of the City. That quantity of polling locations remains open on election day today.

Additionally, voters in Fresno County, 29 days prior to any election, may vote early. All voters have the opportunity to sign up to be a permanent vote-by-mail voter, meaning that their ballot will be automatically mailed to them 29 days prior to any election. If a voter is not a permanent vote-by-mail voter, when they receive their County Voter Information Guide, they can complete and mail in the postcard within the guide requesting a vote-by-mail ballot.

Currently, only the County Clerk's office in downtown Fresno is an early voting location for voters. However in 2020 Fresno County may be eligible to move toward the Vote Center model. I support this model as it has been shown to increase voter turnout in other states. A required number of Vote

Centers would be open for 10 days prior to the election. Additional Vote Centers would be opened within 4 days of the election. All would be open on election day. Voters would no longer be required to appear at a pre-determined polling location. A voter may walk into any Vote Center and their specific ballot will be provided to them.

When we start identifying Vote Center locations, we will be sensitive to the needs of all voters, including the southern parts of the city and rural areas.

3. Will you set up on site voting at the Fresno County Jail?

Jail inmates may register and vote-by-mail while incarcerated if they are eligible to vote. Voter registration services are currently provided to inmates.

I am currently working with the Sheriff's Department to be sure that the information on voting in the Inmate Handbook, is current, correct and helpful.

Inmates may use the jail address as their mailing address for vote-by-mail ballots. I maintain communication with jail staff so that any voted ballots are collected and processed.

4. What measures will you take in increasing voter registration?

The County Clerk's office is continually encouraging eligible voters to register to vote. It is part of our everyday fabric of what the office does. We provide voter registration forms to registration drives. We provide training to these drive leaders in order that registration forms are correctly completed and returned timely to the County Clerk's office.

Eligible voters can register on-line now. A special icon is located on the County Clerk website and many colleges and groups also include that icon on their website.

The County Clerk's office participates at the monthly Naturalization Ceremony for new citizens. We have included a voter registration card in their packet and we provide staff to help new citizens fill out and return their voter registration cards that day.

My office also mails a letter and voter registration card to new homeowners. We encourage them to become registered voters, or if they already are a voter, to update their residential address on the voter file.

Beginning April 16, 2018 California will implement the Motor Voter Program at DMV. Every individual who goes to obtain or renew a driver's license, or acquire a state ID will be registered to vote, if eligible. They may choose to "opt out of" this option. Otherwise they will be automatically registered to vote. This program will increase the voter rolls, and with it increase voter turnout.

I also work directly with the California Veterans Home to ensure that their residents are registered voters (if they wish to be) and are in the permanent vote-by-mail program. The Home's Administrator

works with their residents to make sure ballots are received. We will also be reaching out to other long-term care facilities to assist them in this manner also.

5. Will you set up a program to register high school and college students about voting?

Since becoming County Clerk in 2012, I have continually reached out to young people in an effort to engage them in the voting process.

We have formed partnerships with La Familia Vota and League of Women Voters, who go into the classrooms and explain voter registration to high school students. 16 and 17 year old students can register to vote. Their records are kept in the voter registration system and automatically become active on their 18th birthday. We have registered several hundred students through this program.

We highlight students during “High School Voter Education Weeks”, which is coming up April 16-27, 2018. I will be presenting a resolution to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, explaining the importance of engaging young people in the voting process. I will have students in attendance who will share their thoughts/experiences about the voting process. Some of these students have worked, or will work on election day in our High School Precinct Officer program. Prior high school precinct officers state they the experience confirms their intent to continue to participate as a voter as an adult.

My department reaches out to college students, encouraging them to register to vote and participate in the process. Recently we have placed ads in college newspapers bringing these opportunities to their attention.

6. What other programs would you institute to register young people to vote?

We have an aggressive High School Precinct Officer program which has engaged hundreds of students who serve as precinct officers. This experience shows them democracy in action and encourages them to become voters.

We have supported colleges and universities in registration drives. Our on-line presence has improved with the re-design of our website fresnovote.com. The website can also be accessed by mobile devices and is proving to have a high visitor site count.

7. How would you use the social media to increase voter registration and turnout?

Though county government has specific required purchasing rules, we are working through those various rules on implementation of a trial social media program. The FresnoVotes site has proven to be so successful that we want to ensure we are communicating with Fresno County voters and prospective voters in a way that works best for them.

We realize that most people utilize mobile devices every day for information and we want to provide election information in a way that will reach them, easily and conveniently.

8. What measures would you take to insure the integrity of the election?

The integrity of every election is always my priority. We work hard to make sure all of our processes are open, transparent and follow the law. Prior to each election we convene an Observer Panel, comprised of interested individuals, for an in-depth look at the election process.

Election laws change and I work hard to be sure that we know the laws and are implementing them correctly. I attend statewide meetings on a regular basis and serve as an officer of CACEO (California Association of Clerks and Election Officials). These meetings are critical to staying updated on California laws regarding elections.

Election laws are complicated and specific. I participate in a monthly meeting conference call with California Secretary of State Alex Padilla to receive and provide information. For example, in 2016 when there was a problem with the post office's handling of returned voted ballots, I was the Registrar of Voters that worked directly with the post office and resolved the problem for our county and other counties. Secretary of State Padilla graciously recognized me for my efforts.

9. What measures would you take to insure that potential voters are treated fairly and honestly at the polling sites?

Every effort is always made to insure that all voters are treated fairly and respectfully. It is complicated and challenging because we have 2000 precinct officers and approximately 280 polling locations for each statewide election. We are recruiting and training our precinct officers to be the best they can be for one day. However in the rare instance that a precinct officer is not following the rules we deal with it immediately, even to the point of dismissing them from working for the rest of the day.

We deploy 50 Election Coordinators who can troubleshoot at polling locations and answer precinct officer questions. We have created and provide an extensive and detailed Precinct Officer Handbook for each precinct officer to use on election day. During our 2 hour training class for all precinct officers, we go through the information in the handbook, provide sensitivity training on ADA issues, explain the additional language requirements to provide to voters and perform hands-on training on the voting equipment.

We recruit precinct officers for their language skills. We have many excellent precinct officers who do an amazing job on election day. We are always looking for great people to serve as precinct officers.