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New Data Confirms Findings of “Missing” Mail Ballots in California’s 2018 Midterm

Government report shows surge in provisional voting driven by mail voters who had to vote at the polls.

Santa Clarita, Calif. (September 16, 2019) - The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) in July published quantitative data from the 2018 Midterm’s Election Administration and Voting Survey, which measures voter registration and voting activity for all counties in the country. Election Integrity Project California, Inc. (EIPCa) analyzed the California counties and today reported that the EAC data confirms its earlier-published report that significant numbers of vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots were not delivered to voters in California’s 2018 midterm election. EIPCa’s report, titled “*Failures in California’s 2018 Midterm Election Demand Serious Investigation,*”^{*} documented that thousands of VBM voters did not receive their ballots in that election. Many of these voters instead came to the polls but had to vote provisionally because they had no VBM ballots to surrender.

Importantly, unknown is how many people did not vote because they did not receive their VBM ballots.

EIPCa’s report summarized what its observers witnessed at polling places in just eight of 58 counties on November 6, 2018. In a small sampling (2-10%) of polling places in the eight counties, the poll observers documented over 1,300 vote-by-mail voters who came to the polls to vote because they did not receive their VBM ballots in the mail. Forced to vote provisionally, many became worried or convinced their votes would not be counted. The new EAC data confirms that in Los Angeles County alone, three times as many provisional ballots were cast in 2018 than in the 2014 midterm. At the time, the county election office spokesperson admitted to the media that most of the surge was due to those “*listed as vote-by-mail voters who didn’t have mail ballots with them to surrender*”.^{**}

The new EAC report^{***} confirms that most of LA County’s provisional voting was driven by vote-by-mail voters without a ballot to surrender. According to the EAC, 282,240 Los Angeles County vote-by-mail voters that actually came to the polls had to vote provisionally in that election, accounting for two-thirds of all provisional ballots cast. Similar patterns of VBM voters forced to vote provisionally were seen in EAC and VoteCal data for San Diego, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, Ventura, Fresno, Humboldt, San Francisco and San Joaquin counties.

2018 is the first year that this statistic has been required by the EAC, so there are no comparative figures from previous elections.

The increase in provisional voting may be partially explained by increased overall voter turnout. Statewide voter turnout in the 2018 midterm did increase by 60% over the 2014 midterm; however, provisional voting increased by 221%. Mirroring Los Angeles County, two-thirds of all provisional ballots cast in California were VBM voters forced to vote provisionally.

EIPCa is undertaking a county-by-county inquiry and analysis to answer, among other questions, why so many requested VBM ballots were not delivered to voters in 2018. This must be prevented in California's 2020 election cycle.

“The data from the Election Assistance Commission underscores our concerns that there was a systemic breakdown in the delivery of mail ballots to voters in several counties in 2018,” said EIPCa President Linda Paine. “We are especially concerned about vote-by-mail voters who did not vote because they did not receive their ballots. I encourage vote-by-mail voters who did not receive their mail ballots in the 2018 election to contact us and tell us their stories.” [Affected voters can fill out a contact form at eip-ca.com/contact/]

*[https://www.eip-ca.com/press_releases/EIPCa Findings Report re Nov 2018 Election Final 4 22 2019 re.pdf](https://www.eip-ca.com/press_releases/EIPCa_Findings_Report_re_Nov_2018_Election_Final_4_22_2019_re.pdf)

**[https://laist.com/2018/11/21/provisional ballots surged in la county if you cast one heres what to know.php](https://laist.com/2018/11/21/provisional_ballots_surged_in_la_county_if_you_cast_one_heres_what_to_know.php)

***<https://www.eac.gov/research-and-data/datasets-codebooks-and-surveys/>

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EIPCa is a non-partisan, non-profit, volunteer organization. For over 8 years it has researched elections data and observed California elections to provide citizen oversight to ensure that the state and its counties are complying with laws that protect the integrity of elections. For a full list of counties, go to: eip-ca.com. For more information, please call: Ellen Swensen at (925) 286-1116 or email ellenswensen@eip-ca.com.