

**Voter Guide for  
the  
March 3, 2020 Primary Election**



How to Vote

Developing the capability, knowledge, and habits to be an informed, competent voter - a civic skill.

Specific to: Fresno County, CA

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## Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide knowledge, methods, and tools to enable citizens to become more effective voters.

U.S. citizens, with a few exceptions, have the right and privilege to vote. Historically this right has been hard-fought and retaining it will be subject to continuous pressures. However, [U.S. Voting and Election Laws](#) and the [California Voter's Bill of Rights](#)<sup>1</sup> offer a wide range of rights and protections.

California is committed to raising the voter registration and voting rate. And partly due to the California New Motor Voter (CNMV) program enacted in 2018, nearly 80% of eligible voters are registered. However:

- In each statewide election in California since 1972, less than 60% of eligible voters have voted.
- Approximately 20% of eligible voters in California are not registered to vote.
- In a number of California counties, less than 70% of eligible voters are registered to vote.
- In the 2014 California General Election, only 52% of eligible youth were registered to vote and only 8% of eligible youth, ages 18 to 24, cast a ballot.<sup>2</sup>
- In the 2018 California General Election, only 41.7% of eligible California State University, Fresno students voted.<sup>3</sup>
- In the 2018 California General Election, only 56.24% of the registered voters in Fresno County voted.<sup>4</sup> Assuming 80% of the eligible voters are registered, then about 45% of eligible voters cast a ballot (i.e. 80% x 56%).

Most of the information related to voting focuses on registering to vote and encouraging people to vote. Very little material exists to help people understand how to vote, i.e. register, re-register, or pre-register; gather and organize issue and candidate information; evaluate the information; make voting decisions; determine where, when, and how to vote; vote; and check to make sure your vote was counted.

If this looks a little bit like a project, well it is. The supposition is that voting skills

and habits can be improved over time if voting is treated as an important project, rather than an event.

### Important Dates

| Date                         | Description  |
|------------------------------|--|
| January 23, 2020             | California Voter Information Guide mailed to registered voters beginning on this date. PDF available online now.   |
| February 3, 2020             | Vote-by-Mail ballots, sent to every registered voter, in the mail.   |
| February 4, 2020             | Ballot drop boxes open. From 2/4 - 3/3/2020.   |
| February 17, 2020            | Last day to register for this election.  |
| February 18 to March 3, 2020 | Conditional Voter Registration period. *   |
| February 22, 2020            | 11-day Vote Centers open. From 2/22 - 3/3/2020.  |
| February 25, 2020            | Last day that county election officials will accept any voter's application for a vote-by-mail ballot to be MAILED. Vote-by-mail ballots are still available after February 25 <sup>th</sup> , but only to voters who come to the Fresno County ClerkRegistrar's office. |
| February 29, 2020            | All Vote Centers open (4-day & 11-day).  |
| March 3, 2020                | California Primary Election Day (7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.)  |
| March 6, 2020                | Last day for Fresno County Registrar to receive a Vote-byMail ballot postmarked no later than March 3, 2020.   |

### Steps

#### 1 - Register

**Have you already registered to vote?** Check your voter registration status online at <https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/> or <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/county-clerk-registrar-of-voters>

**Register to vote.** Register online at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voterregistration/> or via a paper voter registration form available at a library or DMV.

- Make sure to understand the difference between registering with or without a party affiliation, and the effect on voting in a primary election. Note also that American Independent, Other, and No Party Preference are not equivalent.<sup>5</sup> <https://calmatters.org/projects/california->

[2020presidential-primary-voting-rules-register-democrat-republicanindependent/](https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/same-day-reg/)

- \* You can “conditionally” register to vote at your county elections office or Vote Center location after the 2/17/2020 voter registration deadline.  
<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/same-day-reg/>
- A recent bill ([SB 207](#)) makes it easier for voters who are already registered in their county to update their address or political party preference by completing an affidavit instead of a conditional voter registration application during the period 2/18 – 3/3/2020. Voters must appear in person and should bring their Vote-by-Mail ballot with them.

**Youth can pre-register.** If you’re 16 or 17, pre-register (at the Registration URL above) and your registration will be activated automatically when you turn 18.

## *2 - Gather information*

Acquire election and voter information from county and state election officials, as well as independent nonpartisan sources.

- California Presidential Primary Election Official Voter Information Guide. A PDF is available now and the Guide will be mailed starting 1/23/2020.  
<https://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/>
- Fresno County Vote-by-Mail ballots and County Voter Information Guides are mailed to every registered voter starting 2/3/2020.
- Easy Voter Guide. <http://www.easyvoterguide.org/>
- Voter’s Edge California. <http://votersedge.org/ca>
- Ballotpedia is the digital encyclopedia of American politics and elections.  
[https://www.ballotpedia.org/Main\\_Page](https://www.ballotpedia.org/Main_Page)
- BallotReady. <https://www.ballotready.org/>
- Calmatters. <https://calmatters.org/projects/voter-guide-2020-californiaprimary/>

## *3 - Evaluate the Information*

- Web Literacy for Student Fact-checkers by Michael A. Caulfield.  
<https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com>
- Is This Source or Information Good (American Library Association)?  
<https://library.csuchico.edu/help/source-or-information-good>

- FactCheck.org (A Project of The Annenberg Public Policy Center). <https://www.factcheck.org/hot-topics/>
- Fake News, Propaganda, and Misinformation: Learning to Critically Evaluate Media Sources (Cornell University Library). [http://guides.library.cornell.edu/evaluate\\_news](http://guides.library.cornell.edu/evaluate_news)
- News Literacy Toolkit (Pacific Library Partnership).<sup>6</sup> <http://plpinfo.org/news-literacy-toolkit>
- Pros & Cons of Current Issues. <https://2020election.procon.org/>

#### 4 – Use an appropriate decision-making method

The League of Women Voters has outlined an evaluation process for candidates: How to Judge a Candidate. <https://www.lwv.org/blog/how-judge-candidate>

However, more and more of the issues we’re voting on in California are considered “wicked problems,” meaning complex and tangled (not evil). A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: 1) incomplete or contradictory knowledge 2) the number of people and opinions involved 3) the large economic burden and 4) the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

Two methods that have proven to be effective on these types of problems are *design thinking* and *deliberative dialogue*. Both utilize the perspective of others, gained through discussion. These two methods may appear to be quite different, but they are composed of the same basic elements (framing, trust, empathy, ideation, the exposure of assumptions, prototyping, action, etc.).

Design Thinking revolves around an interest in gaining a deep understanding of the people for whom products or services are being designed - empathy. And it helps us in the process of questioning: questioning the problem, questioning the assumptions, and questioning the implications. It is useful in tackling problems that are ill-defined or for which there isn’t a single, “correct” answer (e.g. weight of a cell phone), by re-framing the problem in human-centric ways, creating many ideas in brainstorming sessions, and adopting a hands-on approach in prototyping and testing. Design thinking also involves ongoing experimentation: sketching, prototyping, testing, and trying out concepts and ideas.<sup>7</sup>

Deliberative Dialogue is a mode of communication in which participants systematically consider the strengths and weaknesses of an issue in a climate of mutual respect:

- Deliberation may be defined as a process in which a wide range of competing arguments are given careful and systematic consideration in small-group discussions.
- Dialogue is a process of relationship building. It is an exchange of ideas characterized by 1) equality and the absence of coercive influences 2) listening with empathy 3) bringing assumptions into the open.<sup>8</sup>

### *5 - Name and Frame*

When issues are named and framed in public terms, we can identify the problem that we need to talk about (naming) and the critical options and drawbacks for deciding what to do about that problem (framing).

Three key questions drive the development of a framework for public deliberation: 1) What concerns you about this issue? 2) Given those concerns, what would you do about it? 3) If that worked to ease your concern, what are the downsides or trade-offs you might then have to accept? See - Framing Public Issues by the FrameWorks Institute.

<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF/FramingPublicIssuesfinal.pdf>

### *6 - Examine Your Assumptions, Biases, and Emotions*

We all have biases and make assumptions about the world around us. The key to making good voting decisions is to examine those in light of your self-interest as well as your responsibility to the community. Something as simple as who won the football game yesterday can affect our emotions and influence how we vote on a bond issue today.

- Identify and examine the assumptions that are the basis of your views.  
<https://fee.org/articles/the-mistake-you-make-in-every-political-argument/>
- Avoiding Psychological Bias in Decision Making, How to Make Objective Decisions.  
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/avoidingpsychological-bias.htm>
- Factfulness: Dramatic Instincts and Helpful Rules of Thumb.  
<https://www.gapminder.org/factfulness/>

### *7 - Discuss with others*

We have a cultural habit of thought to view a discussion as a debate, where the goal is winning. Design thinking and deliberative dialogue both structure discussions to gather and examine various perspectives and their underlying assumptions.

- Sample Ground Rules for Deliberation & Dialogue Processes. <http://ncdd.org/rc/item/1505/>
- What is a Better Argument? <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/better-arguments-projectreport-key-operating-principles/>
- The National Issues Forums offer a number of free issue guides at <https://www.nifi.org/en/issue-guides/issue-guides>
- Living Room Conversations. <https://www.livingroomconversations.org>
- Red Blue Dictionary. <https://redbluedictionary.org>
- Ask better questions with the Question Formulation Technique. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educationalleadership/oct14/vol72/num02/The-Right-Questions.aspx>

### *8 - Decide and take action to support candidates & issues*

An acknowledged decision method is to carefully weigh the positive and negative attributes associated with each alternative, and find a balance between them. Values are often heart-felt, so decisions with a values component may be best made by including both objective reasoning and your feelings.

- Utilize the forms and action list in How to Judge a Candidate. <https://www.lwv.org/blog/how-judge-candidate>
- Practice. Use the Sample Ballot/Voter Information Guide to make interim candidate and proposition choices, set it aside, and then revisit your draft one or more times before you actually vote. This will utilize both your conscious and subconscious mental capabilities.

### *9 - Determine where to vote*

- Every registered voter is mailed a Vote-by-Mail ballot and a County Voter Information Guide. Your completed Vote-by-Mail ballot can be mailed postage-free, deposited in a Drop Box, or submitted at a Vote Center. See Drop Box Locations: <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/countyclerk-registrar-of-voters>

- Alternatively, you can vote at ANY Vote Center. There are 10, Vote Centers open for 11-days (2/22 - 3/3/2020); and 43, Vote Centers open for 4-days (2/29 – 3/3/2020). See Vote Center Locations and Hours: <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/county-clerk-registrar-of-voters>

## *10 – Vote*

Beginning with the March 3, 2020 election, Fresno County decided to use the Vote Center model authorized by the CA Voter’s Choice Act of 2016.<sup>9</sup>

- Return your completed Vote-by-Mail ballot by mail postage-free, deposit it in a Drop Box (2/4 - 3/3/2020), or submit it at a Vote Center.
- Make sure your signature (the name you use) is the same as the one on your Voter Registration form/CA Driver’s License.
- Alternatively, if you decide to vote at a Vote Center, be prepared and take your marked-up Sample Ballot/Voter Information Guide for reference at the voting booth. Also, bring your blank Vote-by-Mail ballot in case you want to change your address or party preference. Doing these will expedite the voting process.
- In most cases, you don’t have to show ID to vote. However, if you didn’t provide a CA ID number or the last four digits of your social security number when you registered, you may have to furnish an acceptable ID. For a list of acceptable IDs see <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/hava-idstandards/>
- At a Vote Center, voters will have the choice of a traditional paper ballot or the use of an accessible ballot marking device (BMD). Fresno County uses ImageCast X (ICX) ADA equipment from Dominion Voting Systems. See <https://votingsystems.cdn.sos.ca.gov/vendors/dominion/icxinstruct.pdf>
- If your eligibility or registration status can’t be confirmed, you may be required to vote a Provisional Ballot. The voter is allowed to vote a ballot, which is placed into an envelope (instead of the ballot box). These ballots are evaluated during the canvass period. Once the voter's eligibility is determined to be valid, the voter's ballot is then counted during subsequent ballot counting.

## *11 - Make sure your vote was counted*

Check to see if your vote was counted (or your ballot status) at

<https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>



- Once you enter your personal identifying data, four sections of information will be displayed: Personal Information, Voting History, Upcoming Elections, and Election Material. Under Voting History, select one of the previous elections to see when your ballot was received by the county and that Ballot Status says “Accepted” or the reason that it wasn’t. You’ll want to check again after the March 3rd election (but select 3/3/2020 – 2020 Statewide Primary Election) to make sure your vote was counted.
- Fresno County also offers Vote-by-Mail ballot tracking.<sup>10</sup>  
<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-status/wheres-my-ballot/>

## Tools

- TurboVote helps subscribers register to vote, find polling places, and research candidates and measures. The app was launched by Democracy Works and is used by many colleges, including Cal Poly.  
<https://turbovote.org/>
- The Google Civic Information API lets developers build applications that display civic information to their users.  
<https://developers.google.com/civic-information/> and  
<https://developers.google.com/civic-information/docs/v2/>
- Decide Better Together by Nobl. <https://thedecider.app/side-by-sidecomparison> and <https://thedecider.app>
- Gapminder provides free data visualization tools to dismantle misconceptions and promote a fact-based worldview.  
<https://www.gapminder.org/tools/> - \$chart-type=bubbles
- Glossary of election terminology.  
<https://www.eac.gov/electionofficials/glossaries-of-election-terminology>
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).  
<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/frequently-asked-questions/>
- Voting Law Compliance Handbook. A Voter's Guide to Safeguard California's Election Process, Updated May 2018.  
<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/publications-and-resources/voting-lawcompliance-handbook/>

## Acknowledgements

One of the motivations for this voter guide was [AB-773 Voter education: high school pupils](#), which was passed by the California Legislature in September of 2019, but vetoed by the Governor because of cost concerns. However, it's apparent that voting is a civic skill we could all improve on, so the focus changed somewhat. A number of very generous people and organizations provided suggestions to improve the guide. David Brehe, Paso Robles, CA.

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Fresno County Clerk-Registrar. Election Administration Plan, November 2019 <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=39855> (7 February 2020).

Fresno County voter statistics. *Report of Registration County Summary*, Last Updated 1/3/2020. <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=41012> (7 February 2020).

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December 2019)

Vote411.org. Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) in October of 2006, VOTE411.org is a "one-stop-shop" for election related information. <https://www.vote411.org/> (12 December 2019).

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1: Ensuring and Protecting the Rights of Every Voter

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/help-strengthen-ourdemocracy/poll-worker-info/poll-worker-training-standards/section-one/>

<sup>2</sup> AB-1036 Elections: civic outreach and voter engagement. (2019-2020). See Text in Section 1 of AB-1036. [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200AB1036](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1036)

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Democracy & Higher Education: National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement. (2019). *2014 and 2018 report for California State University, Fresno*. Medford, MA. Provided by Fresno State University Communications 2/11/2020.

<sup>4</sup> Fresno County Quick Statistics. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voters-choice-act/fresno/>

<sup>5</sup> Fresno County postcard to request No Party Preference/Other voters to "cross-over." <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/county-clerk-registrar-of-voters/no-party-preference>

<sup>6</sup> News Literacy Toolkit is made possible through a grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, and in partnership with the Pacific Library Partnership.

<sup>7</sup> *What is Design Thinking and Why Is It So Popular?* By Rikke Dam and Teo Siang. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/what-is-design-thinking-and-why-is-it-sopopular>

<sup>8</sup> *Wicked problems, workable solutions: lessons from a public life.* By Daniel Yankelovich. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Fresno County Clerk-Registrar. *Fresno County Voters Choice Act Introduction.* N.d. <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/county-clerk-registrar-of-voters/voters-choice-act-3528> (7 February 2020).

<sup>10</sup> Presidential Primary: Vote-by-Mail Ballot Tracking Service. For the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election, the deadline (for the county) to sign up for this service is January 3, 2020. <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ccrov/pdf/2019/december/19134pk.pdf>