

Early Voting Observation Report: Orange County (CA)

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Orange County has an extensive Vote Center effort in place for early voting in the June 2018 statewide primary election. The Vote Centers are located throughout Orange County, offering voters the opportunity to cast their ballot for the June 2018 primary on-site, or to drop off a completed vote-by-mail ballot.¹

Our team selected two of the Vote Center locations for in-person observation on May 31, 2018:

- Fullerton Community Center
- Costa Mesa Senior Center

We also stopped briefly at the Vote Center located at the Orange County Registrar of Voters's Office, but did not spend significant time there observing the operations of that Vote Center—we observed one voter dropping off a vote-by-mail ballot in the securely locked ballot drop-off box located between the ROV office and parking lot.

The Fullerton Community Center location had ample parking, and the directions to the Vote Center (located within the Community Center at the end of a long hallway) were well marked. The Vote Center was well-staffed, and when we arrived one of the county's coordinators was present. During our time there, a number of voters checked in and successfully cast their ballots. This early voting location is in a relatively small room, and while we did not observe more than a few voters present during our time there, during a period of heavy use it could become crowded. Otherwise, the poll workers and coordinators answered all of our questions, and during our time there election procedures were implemented as expected. The only suggestion that we had for this Vote Center was to add or reposition the location of street-side signs for the Vote Center; those which were present during our visit were difficult for voters approaching the location from certain directions to see (we mentioned this to the coordinator, who agreed to immediately look into our suggestion).

¹The Vote Center locations can be found at <https://www.ocvote.com/voting/current-election-info/2018-statewide-direct-primary-election-info/vote-centers/>.

The Fullerton Community Center location also had a drive-thru ballot drop-off procedure. Two poll workers were stationed outside the Community Center, positioned curbside in the parking lot. The drive-thru lane was well marked, and during our time there one vehicle drove by and dropped off ballot(s). The ballot box was sealed, and well-marked.

The Costa Mesa Vote Center had ample parking when we arrived, and was well marked from the street. Directions to the Vote Center were well placed, and we had no trouble finding the polling place. The Vote Center was in a large, well-lighted room. There were plenty of staff at this Vote Center, and the same coordinator who we met at the Fullerton Community Center was present at the Costa Mesa site. Again, the coordinator answered a number of our questions, and the poll workers dealt efficiently with voters who entered the site. During our time there, a number of voters cast their ballots using the voting machines in the location. One voter who had mis-marked a vote-by-mail ballot appeared, surrendered the mis-marked ballot, and was given a new paper ballot (we left before they completed the process). The Costa Mesa location did not have drive-thru ballot dropoff.

During our observation period at both of these locations, we saw no evidence of electioneering, and all of the election technologies (electronic poll-books for voter check-in, the location's JBC and eSlate voting machines) appeared to be functioning as expected. During our observation period, all election procedures appeared to be implemented well; the Vote Center staffs were pleasant and helpful to all incoming voters.