February 8, 2023

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ONLINE CANDIDATE STATEMENT PROGRAM PILOT REPORT

Executive Summary

This report is to inform your Board of the results and findings of the Online Candidate Statement Pilot Program. This pilot program was the result of Item 41-E of the regular meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors held on Tuesday, February 15, 2022.

This motion instructed the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) to implement a pilot program for Online Candidate Statements for the 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election (June 07, 2022) and the 2022 General Election (November 08, 2022). The Board directed the RR/CC to report back to the Board in writing with the results of the pilot program and recommendations for continuing and expanding the program within 90 days of certification of the General Election.

The RR/CC implemented and conducted the Online Candidate Statement Pilot Program for the 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election and the 2022 General Election. This report summarizes the results of the pilot program and presents recommendations for the future of the program.

Online Candidate Statements Pilot Program Summary

Los Angeles County provides candidate statements of qualifications in the Sample Ballots mailed to registered voters every election. Due to the size and diversity of the Los Angeles County electorate, the printing of candidate statements can be costly and burdensome for some candidates. These factors can lead to instances where voters may receive statements from some, but not all candidates, in their Sample Ballot.

The Online Candidate Statement Pilot Program aimed to expand voter access to candidate statements and provide candidates with a no-cost option to reach voters. The aim of expanded voter information availability was further enhanced by providing Online Candidate Statements in all covered languages.

The pilot program allowed Candidate Statements to be published online on the RR/CC's website (www.lavote.gov) for nonpartisan County offices and judicial positions as authorized by California Elections Code section 13307, subsections (c)(1) through (c)(5), and made it possible to gather information regarding costs, candidate requests, and voter usage for possible expansion or updates in future election cycles.

Online Application for Online Candidate Statements

The RR/CC developed an online application and implemented new processes and procedures for this pilot program. The intuitive features of the new application and program are detailed below.

Intake Process

As part of outreach and awareness efforts, the RR/CC developed and distributed an information sheet directly to candidates or their representatives at the first of their required in-person visits during the nomination filing period. Candidates, or their proxies, were provided the opportunity to determine if they wanted to submit an online candidate statement. Candidates were able to submit their request along with the statement during their second or final visit. The webpage used to access online candidate statements for the 2022 Primary Election was also used to promote the availability of the service for the 2022 General Election.

The steps of the intake process are as follows:

- Public-facing/counter staff assisted candidates and provided information about online and printed candidate statements during the initial contact
- Interested candidates submitted a hard copy of the statement and emailed the statement for input into the system
- Staff performed the required word count review for compliance with the 200-word limit
- Staff performed the required language and content review for identification of any impermissible information, declarations, or statements
- Staff conducted the standard, multi-level proofing process
- Staff conducted subsequent communications with candidates for updates and to address any questions

Operational Review of the Statements

RR/CC operational staff access submitted statements for review through an online administration portal. The main administration view displays a list of all candidates

associated with the current election. Next to each candidate is a list of language-coded icons representing the statements inputted for the corresponding candidate. Clicking on any of the language icons will direct the user to the statement editor for the selected candidate statement. If no statement has been entered for a candidate, the user can click on the *Add Statement* button to begin indexing a new candidate statement.

Additionally, there is also a feature that allows candidate statement translations to be imported into the portal through a file upload process, if a translation vendor is used for an election.

Once the user clicks on an icon, the statement editor will open up. The English statement will always display on the right side of the display, and the user can view the translation on the left side of the display. This allows the user to proof the statement against the original English version and make any necessary corrections through the editor.

Candidate statements proceed through the following stages. The colors act as a visual cue to quickly determine the status of a statement:

Stage	Description
Empty	Statement is new and has not started
Draft	Editing has started but is not ready for approval
Pending Approval	Statement is no longer editable and is ready for review
Approved	Statement is approved and ready to be publshed
Published	Statement is published to the public-facing website

The following roles are configured for the portal:

1. Indexer: Enters the initial statement and edits if necessary
2. Approver: Reviews the translated statements and approves for web publishing
3. Web Publisher: Publishes all approved statements for an election
4. Admin: Consists of all previous roles, and the ability to import files

Translations

Users can access any of the translated statements by clicking on the icons above the statement in the editor. The editor supports nineteen languages and color-codes the status of each statement translation on the icon.
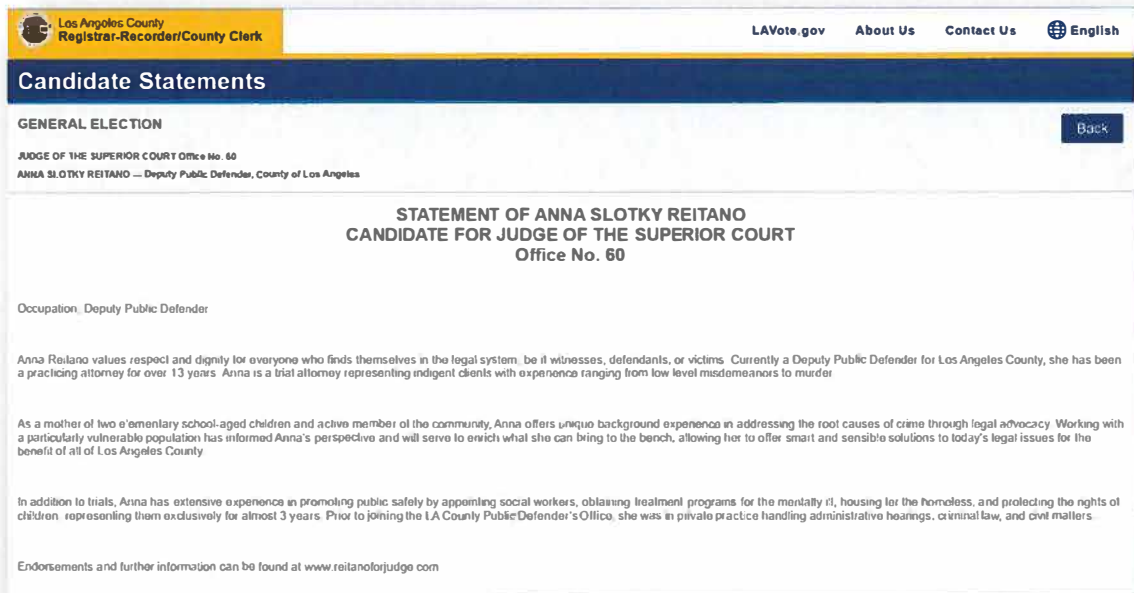
<u>Online Publishing of Candidate Statements</u>

The public-facing website allows the public to access all published candidate statements for an election. There is a language toggle in the upper right corner of the page, allowing users to view all available languages. Currently, the application supports up to nineteen languages.

Users can use the website's interface to filter results quickly, find a candidate, and click on the *View Statement* button to view a candidate's statement.
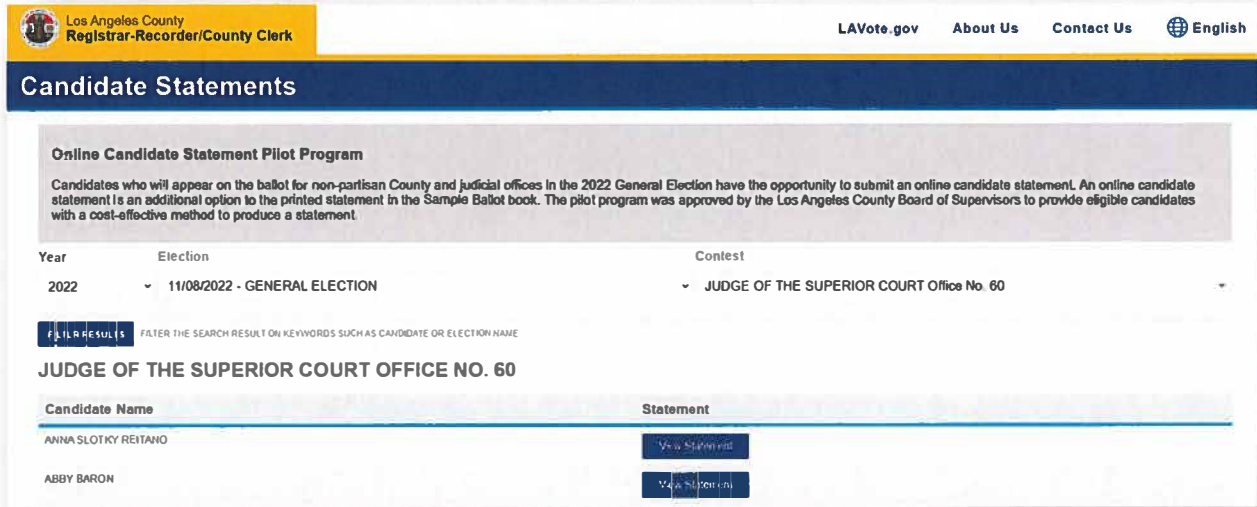
When the *View Statement* button is clicked, the website will display the candidate's statement in the selected language.

Fees

The pilot program for the 2022 election cycle allowed candidates to publish online candidate statements of qualifications at no cost to the candidate. Consequently, no fees were applied during the pilot. The Department is in the process of formulating a cost recovery model for the full production rollout of the online canidate statement process while maintaining the Online options as a more affordable option for those who do not have the resources to purchase a printed statement in the Sample Ballot that is mailed to each voter.

Candidate Participation Summary

For the June 7, 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election, there were fifty-eight candidates eligible to submit an online candidate statement, that included the offices of Supervisorial District 1, Supervisorial District 3, Assessor, Sheriff, and Judge of the Superior Court. Of the fifty-eight eligible candidates, fifty pursued this option for a participation rate of 86%.

For the November 8, 2022 General Election, there were sixteen candidates eligible to submit an online candidate statement, that included the offices of Supervisorial District 3, Sheriff, and Judge of the Superior Court. Of the sixteen eligible candidates, thirteen pursued this option for a participation rate of 81%.

As evidenced in both election cycles, the majority of candidates opted for the publication of an online candidate statement.

RR/CC Recommendations

Based on the current interpretation of the California Elections Code (CEC) provisions related to online candidate statements, including CEC 13307(c)(1), and the adoption rate of online candidate statements, the RR/CC recommends that the the department proceed with a full implementation of Online Candidate Statements Program.

The RR/CC further recommends that Online Candidate Statements be processed and published based on a nominal cost recovery rate that maintains the cost-effective nature and incentive of the program.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at (562) 462-2716 or email dlogan@rrcc.lacounty.gov. Your staff may also contact Chief Deputy Jeramy Gray at (562) 462-2883 or email jgray@rrcc.lacounty.gov.

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