

Amid pandemic, in-person voting underway in California

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Early voting underway

Jesse Gary reports.

SAN JOSE, Calif. - It's the final few days until the people of the American republic have their voices heard. The weekend before Election Day 2020 saw a flurry of activity.

"This is now open until Tuesday. And of course, everyone can vote until Tuesday, but not after Tuesday. So please get out and vote," said Mayor Sam Liccardo, (D) San Jose.

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Saturday, San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo used a new exhibit at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) to exemplify the importance of voting. The institute was open as a polling place where voters take advantage of casting ballots in-person.

"Contemporary art can help us process, navigate, think about, the most critical issues facing us," said Alison Gass, the ICA's executive director & chief curator.

The issue facing the nation, which party controls the leavers of power? Voters have turned out in record number during early voting. Nationally, over 90 million ballots have already been cast.

Sonoma State University political scientist Dr. David McCuan says the country has never had an election season mired in three major forces..

The Covid pandemic created a health scare. The resulting shuttered economy created an economic scare. And toxic politics on both sides have created urgency for people to vote..

"That combination we haven't seen and as a result, it has spurred people to action. It's spurred people who watch the nfl and the nba. But also people who've been sitting on the sidelines," said Dr. McCuan.

In all parts of the Bay Area, voters are using part of the weekend to drop off their ballots..

"It's my civic duty and I really appreciate where we are. And I want to exercise my duty," said Oakland voter Katani Franklin. Added Hooman Hodjat as he cast his ballot in Martinez, "It's a much more empowering choice when you're

doing it in person. And then I have a better feeling about things getting counted too.”

Contra Costa County elections officials say they’ve already received so many mail-in ballots, they moved the ballot extraction process to a warehouse the size of a football field in Martinez. Deputy County Clerk Debi Cooper says more people have already voted than did in the primary election last Spring..

“We think we’ll be able to have every single ballot received by us by the close of business today, into the count on Tuesday,” said Cooper.

With the clock ticking, hours now separate the ability of people to vote, from the will of the people from being heard.

“We hope this will just be the start of an expansion of democracy throughout our country, ” said Liccardo.

At this stage, officials say it’s better to drop your ballot at polling site rather than use the postal service. But all ballot with a postmark of November 3 that are received up to 17 days after the election will be counted.

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