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Election Night Data-Feed Guide

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Document History

Version	Date	Author	Description
1.00	12/20/2007	SOS ITD	Initial Release
1.10	04/08/2008	SOS ITD	Update for 2008 Statewide Direct Primary Election
1.11	07/27/2008	SOS ITD	Update for 2008 General Election
2.00	03/16/2009	SOS ITD	Update for 2009 Statewide Special Election
2.01	04/10/2009	SOS ITD	Added the 'update' report type.
3.00	03/23/2010	SOS ITD	Update for 2010 Statewide Direct Primary, revised record layout for report date in V Message file and XML 530 file.
4.00	09/13/2010	SOS ITD	Update for 2010 General Election, revised record layout for candidate name in C Message file and XML 510 file.
5.00	3/16/2012	SOS ITD	Update for 2012 Presidential Primary election. Added Section 1.2 Data File Changes.
6.00	09/10/2012	SOS ITD	Update for 2012 General Election
7.00	04/09/2014	SOS ITD	Updated for 2014 Primary Election. Split the document into separate files. Added support for EML v7.0-cs1
8.00	03/01/2016	SOS ITD	Updated for 2016 Presidential Primary Election. Dropped support for EML 5.0.
9.00	03/01/2018	SOS ITD	Updated for 2018 Statewide Direct Primary Election.
10.00	09/01/2018	SOS ITD	Updated for 2018 General Election
11.00	01/11/2020	SOS ITD	Updated for 2020 Presidential Primary Election
12.00	09/01/2020	SOS ITD	Updated for 2020 General Election
14.00	07/12/2021	SOS ITD	Updated for 2021 Recall Election
15.00	04/28/2022	SOS ITD	Updated for 2022 Primary Election
16.00	09/09/2022	SOS ITD	Updated for 2022 General Election
17.00	01/02/2024	SOS ITD	Updated for 2024 Presidential Primary Election

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1. Introduction

Each election night, the Secretary of State's office provides live election results in data files to media clients who have signed up with the Secretary of State's office. The data files are provided for media clients to use and process by an external system. This Election Night Data-Feed Guide is intended to give the media client a perspective of the file formats offered and to provide detailed information for both file formats.

For additional information and sample files, go to www.sos.ca.gov/media.

1.1. File formats

Each election cycle, the Secretary of State's office has several formats for use by media clients. Our current formats are:

- ASCII data format – a domain specific pipe delimited format.
- JSON – an API that will return election results in a JSON format.

1.2. File Retrieval

Media clients have access to the data-feed files via a website provisioned only for media clients on Election Night or through an API. Media clients will receive URL information for retrieving election night data files after signing up with the Secretary of State's office.

The March election will include one file containing election results for Presidential Primaries, U.S. Senate (Full Term), U.S. Senate (Partial/Unexpired Term), U.S. House of Representatives (52 districts), State Senate (20 districts, odd-numbered), State Assembly (80 districts), and State Ballot Measures general contests.

2. General Information

2.1. Contact Information

Please direct all technical questions and comments to electionresults-media@sos.ca.gov .

2.2. Pre-Election Night Data Files

The pre-election night data files are files that media clients may use to build an external system.

In the ASCII file format, each set of the pre-election night data files contains the five files listed below:

- Candidate Information (C message file)
- Precinct Numbers by County (P message file)
- Contest Codes and Descriptions (R message file)
- County Codes and County Names (S message file)
- Voting Results and County Reporting Status (V message file). This file will show zero votes cast for all candidates.

2.3. Election Night Data Files

The election night data files are created approximately every five minutes after the polls close at 8:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Election Day. There may be longer periods of time during which some counties show no updates because each of the 58 county elections offices processes ballots differently. County elections officials are required to send initial results to the Secretary of State's office no more than two hours after they begin tallying the votes (no later than 10:00 p.m.). Data files will be generated until all counties have reported final numbers for the semi-official canvass.

2.3.1. ASCII Files

The election night data file for ASCII feeds is the V message file. This file contains both the V message records and the A message records which are the Voting Results and County Reporting Status respectively.

For complete details and a technical description of the V message file, please see the ASCII File Format document at www.sos.ca.gov/media.

2.3.2. JSON API

For the election night data feed, the Secretary of State offers a JSON REST API v1 option.

Please direct all technical questions and comments to electionresults-media@sos.ca.gov .

3. Testing

The Secretary of State's office is committed to integrated system testing. To achieve that goal, the Secretary of State's office performs several iterations of testing in the weeks leading up to the election for both internal and data-feed media clients. The system tests simulate election night by generating test data. The Secretary of State's office encourages counties and data-feed media clients to participate in the system tests.

For a specific schedule of testing opportunities, see the **Testing Schedule** document at www.sos.ca.gov/media.