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California State Senate

ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS



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AGENDA

Tuesday, July 15, 2025
9:30 a.m. -- 1021 O Street, Room 2100

MEASURES HEARD IN FILE ORDER

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|---------------|--|
| 1. | AB 699 | Stefani | Elections: local tax measures. |
| 2. | AB 789 | Bonta | Political Reform Act of 1974: security expenses. |
| 3. | AB 808 | Addis | Campaign statements and registrations: filing online or electronically. |
| 4. | AB 950 | Solache | Political Reform Act of 1974: advertisements. |
| 5. | AB 1079 | Ávila Farías | Civil appeals: stay of enforcement. |
| 6. | AB 1164 | Ransom | Elections: Voter Bill of Rights. |
| 7. | AB 1214* | Patterson | Elections: official canvass. |
| 8. | AB 1370* | Patterson | State Legislature: nondisclosure agreements. |
| 9. | AB 1249 | Wilson | Early voting: satellite locations. |
| 10. | AB 1411 | Sharp-Collins | Voter education and outreach plans. |
| 11. | AB 1511* | Elections | Political Reform Act of 1974: refunding and transferring contributions: voter information guide. |
| 12. | AB 1512* | Elections | Elections: ballot language. |
| 13. | AB 1513* | Elections | Election procedures: certified mail and superior courts. |

*Proposed for Consent

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 699	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Stefani		
Version:	7/3/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Elections: local tax measures.

DIGEST

This bill allows, at the choice of the proponents, a statement about the tax rate, duration of the tax, and amount of revenue raised to appear either on the ballot or in the voter information guide for local measures that impose a tax of varying rates or authorize the sale of bonds.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that any local government bond issue that creates a lien on a property for ad valorem (according to value) property taxes must be submitted to the voters for approval. Approval requires a two-thirds vote of the electorate, except for certain bonds to improve school facilities, which may pass with a 55% vote in favor.
- 2) Requires, pursuant to the California Constitution, that local measures imposing taxes be submitted to the voters and must receive a two-thirds vote of the electorate to pass.
- 3) Requires, for each local bond issue, the local government to mail its voters information that includes the best estimate of the tax increase and years of collection of that increase needed to repay the bond, as well as the best estimate of the debt service required for the bond.
- 4) Requires a county elections official to mail a county voter information guide to each voter in the jurisdiction prior to each election that contains information about candidates and measures on the ballot, among other matters. In specified circumstances, a voter may opt out of receiving a voter information guide by mail and instead receive the information electronically.
- 5) Requires for each measure submitted to the voters that the ballot contain a ballot statement of no more than 75 words that is a condensed version of the title and summary, including the financial impact summary.
- 6) Requires the ballot statement for all local ballot measures that impose a tax or raise the rate of a tax, including measures authorizing the issuance of bonds or the

incurrence of debt, to include the amount of money to be raised annually and the rate and duration of the tax to be levied.

This bill:

- 1) Requires, for a local measure that imposes or increases a tax with more than one rate or that authorizes the issuance of bonds, the jurisdiction submitting the measure to the voters or the proponents, if it is an initiative measure, to inform the elections official conducting the election which of these statements to include on the ballot:
 - a) The estimate of the money it will raise annually, the resulting tax rate, and duration of the tax; or
 - b) The phrase “See county voter guide for detailed tax rate information.”
- 2) Requires an information statement to be mailed or, when a voter requests, to be electronically delivered, to voters for each measure that receives the ballot statement “See county voter guide for detailed tax rate information.” The local jurisdiction or the proponents shall provide information to the elections official to include in the county voter information guide, as follows:
 - a) A concise description of the purpose of the tax and how its proceeds will be spent.
 - b) A list of all the rates that are expected and how they will be imposed.
 - c) A plain language description of what would cause the tax rates to vary over time.
 - d) An explanation of the duration of the tax and how its expiration occurs.
 - e) If the measure includes issuing bonds, whether they create property tax liens, the best estimate of the tax increase and years of collection of that increase needed to repay the bond, and the best estimate of the debt service required for the bond.
- 3) Specifies that Mello-Roos community facilities districts and charter cities may submit specified documents to be included in the voter information guide to comply with 2) above.

BACKGROUND

AB 809 (Obernolte). AB 809 (Obernolte), Chapter 337, Statutes of 2015, required the ballot, if a proposed local measure imposed a tax or raised the rate of a tax, to include a statement of the amount of money to be raised annually and the rate and duration of the tax to be levied. AB 809 added this language to a provision of law that applied only to local initiative measures. AB 809 took effect in January 2016 and was intended to provide greater transparency to voters about local tax measures on which they were voting.

City of Carson v. Logan. In 2016, the City of Carson, joined by six other cities in Los Angeles County, filed a lawsuit in the Los Angeles County Superior Court arguing that

the ballot for a local tax measure on the November 2016 General Election Ballot, Measure M, violated ballot label requirements of AB 809. They argued that that the ballot did not state the amount of the money to be raised annually, the rate of the tax, or duration of the tax. In opposition, the respondents argued that the language of AB 809 applied only to initiative measures that qualify for the ballot through a petition signed by voters of the local jurisdiction. The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Board of Directors, using its authority under Public Utilities Code, placed Measure M on the ballot, so it was not an initiative measure. The court ruled in favor of the respondents.

In response, AB 195 (Obernolte), Chapter 105, Statutes of 2017, applied the provisions of AB 809 to all local ballot measures that impose a tax or raise the rate of a tax, including local bonds.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. This bill expands transparency for local tax and bond measures by providing the option to include key financial measures in the voter information guide, while amending ballot label requirements that have proven problematic or even impossible for tiered tax rates and bond issuances. The improved financial disclosures created by this bill will help voters better understand the potential financial impacts of a proposed bond or tax measure.

Requiring that financial measures be explained to a voter in a 75-word ballot label can be too restrictive and can lead to confusion and at times can be misleading to voters. For example, tax rates for bonds issued in multiple series under one voter approval may fluctuate significantly over time. Attempting to comply with the law, local agencies are forced to insert rates into their ballot label language that are averages, projections, or statutory maximums that may not be charged in any given year.

Reducing tax and bond measures to be summarized in 75-words has led to lower passage rates and jurisdictions deciding not to go to the ballot at all. This bill addresses a serious problem in current law that inhibits local tax mechanisms that cannot be accurately explained in the 75-word ballot label. This bill is smart, good government policy that enhances transparency while ensuring local jurisdictions can continue to work in partnership with their local communities in support of vital infrastructure.

- 2) Ballots Are Long and Full. Existing law dictates the content of ballots, including containing the title of each office, the names and ballot designations of candidates, titles and summaries of measures submitted to voters, and instructions to voters. Existing law also requires a ballot to be printed in a certain form. These requirements leave limited space to accommodate further requirements. For this reason, existing law also requires a county elections official to mail a county voter information guide to each voter in the jurisdiction prior to each election. This bill attempts for local tax measures to address the balance between information on the ballot, where space is limited but seen by every voter, and in the voter information guide, where it is not limited but not every voter looks.

- 3) Arguments in Support. The California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO), writing in support, notes that under existing law, if a proposed local measure imposes a tax or raises the rate of a tax, the ballot must include the amount of money to be raised annually by the tax and the rate and duration of the tax. For measures that would impose or increase a tax with more than one rate or authorize the issuance of bonds, this bill allows the tax rate information to be provided in the county voter information guide instead of on the ballot. CACEO greatly appreciates standardizing and simplifying language that is required to appear on the ballot and believes this will help voters navigate their ballot.
- 4) Arguments in Opposition. Opponents write that this bill seeks to undo the positive change made by AB 809 of 2015 and AB 195 of 2017, because it exempts some measures that impose or increase taxes from including the amount of money to be raised annually and the rate and duration of the tax to be levied on the ballot. Opponents write:

For many, the ballot label is the only thing a voter reads before making their decision and having easy access to this critical information is imperative. We believe, when faced with a tax that could last decades, that voters should have access to as much information as possible. Relegating this information to the separately mailed voter guide will reduce transparency for local tax and bond measures.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 195 (Obernolte), Chapter 105, Statutes of 2017, requires the ballot to include a statement for all local ballot measures that impose a tax or raise the rate of a tax to include specified information about the tax, instead of making such a requirement applicable only to local initiative measures.

AB 809 (Obernolte), Chapter 337, Statutes of 2015, requires the ballot, if a proposed local initiative imposed a tax or raised the rate of a tax, to include in the statement of the ordinance the amount of money to be raised annually and the rate and duration of the tax to be levied.

PRIOR ACTION

Senate Local Government Committee:	5 - 2
Assembly Floor:	54 - 20
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 3
Assembly Elections Committee:	4 - 2

POSITIONS

Sponsors: All Home
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California
Enterprise Community Partners

Support: Association of California School Administrators
California Association of Clerks & Election Officials
California Association of School Business Officials
California Housing Partnership
California Special Districts Association
California's Coalition for Adequate School Housing
City of Oakland
Community College Facility Coalition
East Bay Housing Organizations
Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
Riverside County Superintendent of Schools
San Diego Housing Federation
San Diego Unified School District
San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association SPUR
SEIU California
State Building and Construction Trades Council of California

Oppose: California Association of Realtors
California Business Roundtable
California Taxpayers Association
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 789	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Bonta		
Version:	7/8/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	No
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Political Reform Act of 1974: security expenses.

DIGEST

This bill allows candidates for office and elected officials to use unlimited amounts of campaign funds for security purposes until January 1, 2029, and \$10,000 per year thereafter.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Includes the Political Reform Act (PRA), which establishes California's campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures, and which created the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.
- 2) Prescribes that contributions deposited into a campaign account are held in trust to be used to elect candidates and for expenses associated with holding office.
- 3) Prohibits using campaign funds for the purchase, lease, or refurbishment of any appliance or equipment on real property leased or owned by a candidate, the candidate's campaign, or an immediate family member of the candidate.
- 4) Makes an exception to the prohibition in 3) for up to \$10,000 over the course of a candidate's or elected officer's lifetime to be spent for security expenses to protect the candidate, the elected officer, or the immediate family or staff thereof, provided that the threat arises from being a candidate, elected officer, or the family or staff of that person.
- 5) Defines security expenses for purposes of this exception in 4) above as:
 - a) The reasonable costs associated with installing and monitoring home or office electronic security.
 - b) The reasonable costs of providing personal security.
 - c) Any other tangible item related to security.

- d) Excluding payments for a gun or made to a relative.
- 6) Mandates that the candidate or elected officer one year after leaving office or after the conclusion of the threat, whichever comes later, must return any tangible security items to the campaign or reimburse the campaign for them at their fair market value.
- 7) Requires the candidate or elected officer to report any expenditure or reimbursement for security to the FPPC on their annual campaign statement and to also submit a form signed under penalty of perjury that describes and verifies the threat to the candidate or elected officer or their immediate family or staff that arose as a result of being a candidate or elected officer.
- 8) Mandates that the candidate or elected officer maintain various records related to payments for security, including reports that provide evidence of the threat that gave rise to the expenditure.

This bill:

- 1) Deletes, until January 1, 2029, the lifetime cap on security expenses and allows a candidate or elected officer to expend an unlimited amount for these purposes.
- 2) Sets, beginning on January 1, 2029, a cap of \$10,000 per calendar for security expenses from campaign funds.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. Serving in elected office is an immense privilege and responsibility but in recent years, the climate surrounding public service has shifted dramatically. Candidates, elected officials, and the staff who support them are increasingly facing serious threats, harassment, and violence simply for carrying out their duties. These threats are not abstract. They are real, targeted, and growing in frequency and intensity.

Disturbing incidents have occurred across the nation from the murder of a state legislator and her husband in Minnesota to the evacuation of Governor Josh Shapiro and his family in Pennsylvania due to threats and arson. These events are not isolated. They are part of a broader pattern of political intimidation.

Public service should never require sacrificing one's personal safety or the safety of our families and staff. This bill provides a necessary tool to help protect those who step forward to serve. In doing so, it helps uphold the integrity of our democratic institutions and the safety of those who lead them.

- 2) Less Than One Year. This bill amends existing law that allows candidates and office holders to use campaign funds on personal security expenses for themselves, their families, and their staff members. AB 2041 (Bonta), Chapter 372, Statutes of 2024, an urgency measure, created this existing law and took effect on September 22, 2024. Prior to that, the PRA generally prohibited using campaign funds for these purposes with very limited exceptions for home or office security systems. Given the

law has been in place for less than a year, it is unclear why it is now timely to delete the \$10,000 lifetime cap and allow for unlimited campaign spending on personal security services for candidates, elected officers, their staffs, and family members. After all, violence against candidates and public officials is a long-standing blight in this country and its political life. It has included armed individuals coming into the Assembly Chambers during an Assembly floor session, the storming of our nation's Capitol, and the assassination of U.S. presidents, candidates, and legislators. It is, therefore, unclear why it is now timely to delete the cap limiting the use of campaign funds for personal security expenses.

- 3) The \$10,000 Cap. Amendments to AB 2041 made on the Senate Floor on August 22, 2024 imposed the \$10,000 life time cap in existing law. The bill imposes no cap for the next three years, and then places a \$10,000 per year cap after that. While the threats of violence against political figures appear to be increasing over the past several years, it is unclear what or how large of a constraint the existing cap has put on candidates and office holders over the past 10 months. Committee staff is unaware of any analysis indicating what problems the \$10,000 lifetime cap is creating or what an appropriate alternative cap would be.
- 4) FPPC Data. The FPPC reports that since the enactment of AB 2041 in September 2024, it has received five filings from candidates or elected officials indicating use of campaign funds for security expenses pursuant to existing law.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 2041 (Bonta), Chapter 372, Statutes of 2024, permits a candidate or elected official over their lifetime to use up to \$10,000 of campaign funds for specified security related expenses to protect the candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of that person.

AB 37 (Bonta) of 2023 would have authorized campaign funds to be used for costs related to security expenses, as defined, to protect a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer. Governor Newsom vetoed that bill. His veto message read:

While I support the author's intention, the bill as drafted does not clearly define "security expenses." Without more guidance on what would or would not be allowed as a legitimate use of campaign funds, this bill could have unintended consequences and could lead to use of political donations for expenditures far beyond what any reasonable donor would expect. We must ensure political donations are utilized in a manner consistent with their intended purpose.

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: Todd Spitzer, District Attorney of Orange County
21st Century Alliance
California District Attorneys Association

Oppose: None received

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 808	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Addis		
Version:	7/8/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Campaign statements and other reports: submission by facsimile

DIGEST

The bill eliminates the option to file various campaign reports via facsimile and updates terms used in state law to reflect the electronic filing of required campaign-related reports.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Creates the Political Reform Act (PRA), which sets campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures, and establishes the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.
- 2) Requires, pursuant to the PRA, candidates for elective office, committees formed to support or oppose candidates for public office or ballot measures, slate mailer organizations, and other specified entities, to file periodic and activity-based campaign statements and reports disclosing contributions, expenditures, and other related matters.
- 3) Requires public officials and candidates periodically to file statements of economic interests to disclose to the public their financial interests, which in some instances can be filed via facsimile.
- 4) Permits various campaign reports and statements of economic interests to be filed by facsimile.
- 5) Defines a “campaign statement” as an itemized report prepared on a form or in a manner prescribed by the FPPC that provides the information required by the PRA.
- 6) Requires each campaign committee to file a “statement of organization,” which must include specified information about the committee as well as the candidate or ballot measure it supports or opposes. Committees must file the statement with the Secretary of State (SOS) and also file a copy with a local filing officer, as required.

- 7) Requires that when filing a campaign statement or report disclosing an independent expenditure, the controlling principal of the committee making the disclosure shall sign a verification statement attesting to the independence of the expenditure.
- 8) Requires the SOS, in consultation with FPPC, to develop and certify for public use a new online filing and disclosure system for statements and reports that provide public disclosure of campaign finance and lobbying information in a user-friendly, easily understandable format, as specified. This is known as the Cal-Access Replacement System (CARS).

This bill:

- 1) Takes effect when the SOS certifies CARS.
- 2) Eliminates the option to file campaign reports and statements of economic interests by facsimile and instead allows for filing by email.
- 3) Renames “campaign statement” as a “campaign report” and modifies the definition to mean an itemized report prepared in a manner prescribed by the FPPC providing the information required by the PRA, thus deleting the phrase “on a form.”
- 4) Replaces the term “campaign statement” with “campaign report” throughout the PRA.
- 5) Replaces the term “statement of organization” with “registration” throughout the PRA and eliminates the requirement to file a copy with a local filing officer. Instead, a campaign committee registers with the SOS, and the SOS must make the registration available to the local filing officer within 24 hours of the registration.
- 6) Provides that the independent expenditure verification statement described in 7) in existing law applies only to semi-annual and pre-election campaign statements. Because of this, reports of independent expenditures made during the 90 days before an election which must filed within 24 hours of the expenditure will no longer need to be signed.
- 7) Deletes a requirement in the PRA that the FPPC publish a “booklet” containing the PRA, and instead simply requires the FPPC to publish the PRA, thus allowing it to be in electronic format.
- 8) Deletes language limiting loans from candidates to their own campaigns, which was made obsolete by a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2022.
- 9) Updates language throughout the PRA to conform it with filings being made via CARS when it begins to operate.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author’s Statement. This bill modernizes California’s campaign finance laws to support a digital system, thus enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and transparency for better public access to financial disclosures.

- 2) Cal-Access and CARS. In 2000, the SOS deployed, pursuant to SB 49 (Karnette), Chapter 866, Statutes of 1997, a system called the California Automated Lobby Activity and Campaign Contribution and Expenditure Search System, or Cal-Access. Cal-Access replaced the paper-based system and provides on-line filing of reports and statements required by the PRA. It also provides on-line access to these statements and reports for the public.

Cal-Access is now 26 years old, and the SOS reports that components of the system are no longer supported by its vendor. As a result, the system has periodically crashed and denied public access. Additionally, the SOS has indicated that the ability to make modifications to Cal-Access is very limited.

SB 1349 (Hertzberg), Chapter 845, Statutes of 2016, directed the SOS, in consultation with the FPPC, to replace Cal-Access with a new disclosure system, the Cal-Access Replacement System or CARS. The SOS does not expect to fully deploy CARS until late 2026 at the earliest, which means that the effective date of this bill is delayed until then.

- 3) Candidate Loans. Existing provisions of the PRA prohibit a candidate from lending more than \$100,000 to their own campaign committee. Federal law also puts restrictions on candidate loans. In 2018, U.S. Senator Ted Cruz made a loan of \$260,000 to his re-election campaign, which is in excess of the federal limit of \$250,000. In 2019, Senator Cruz then challenged the federal law in order to be fully repaid and won the lawsuit. The Federal Elections Commission, which enforces federal campaign laws, appealed, and then in 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled for Senator Cruz, declaring limits on candidate loans to their own campaigns as unconstitutional under the First Amendment.

The FPPC then determined that under the decision the candidate loan limit in the PRA is also unconstitutional and unenforceable. Deleting the limit from the PRA is cleanup, but it was included in this bill specifically so that CARS will not need to be built to monitor whether candidates are violating the unenforceable limit on campaign loans.

- 4) Arguments in Support. The FPPC states in its sponsor letter that the bill will make important technical updates to the PRA consistent with the transition to CARS. These include eliminating the option of submitting filings via fax, deleting form from the definition of a campaign statement, and ending the need to sign 24-hour reports required during the period before an election day. The FPPC notes that these changes are consistent with advances in modern technology and will apply to political campaigns, lobbying firms, and individual lobbyists who file with the SOS. These changes will support the State of California in its transition to CARS.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

SB 1349 (Hertzberg), Chapter 845, Statutes of 2016, requires the SOS, in consultation with the FPPC, to develop CARS.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	69 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	14 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsors: California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.
California Fair Political Practices Commission

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 950	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Solache		
Version:	7/8/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Political Reform Act of 1974: advertisements

DIGEST

This bill makes changes to disclosures required in campaign advertisements so they are shorter and take up less space, including for those on billboards.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Includes the Political Reform Act (PRA), which establishes California's campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures, and which created the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.
- 2) Defines "advertisement," for the purposes of the PRA, as any general or public communication that is authorized and paid for by a campaign committee to support or oppose at least one candidate for elective office or at least one ballot measure.
- 3) Requires advertisements that support or oppose candidates or ballot measures to include disclosure statements that comply with certain formatting, display, legibility, and audibility requirements.
- 4) Requires these disclosure statements typically to disclose the committee paying for the advertisement, the top contributors to the committee paying for the advertisement, the use of artificial intelligence in its making, and in the case of independent expenditures, a notation that reads, "This advertisement was not authorized or paid for by a candidate for this office or a committee controlled by a candidate for this office."
- 5) Requires, in the case of a printed advertisement that is larger than those designed to be individually distributed including yard signs and billboards, that the disclosures be in Arial equivalent type font with each line taking up a total height of at least 5 percent of the height of the advertisement, and printed on a solid background with sufficient contrast that is easily readable by the average viewer.
- 6) Excludes from the definition of advertisement, items such as skywriting, apparel, and small items, on which it would be very difficult to include the required disclosures.

This bill:

- 1) Names itself the Billboard Disclose Act.
- 2) Allows the shortening of names of top contributors in required disclosure statements in advertisements by, among other things:
 - a) Leaving out from the beginning of the name “The,” “A,” or “An.”
 - b) Leaving out from the end of the name “and affiliated entities,” “and its subsidiaries,” “state council,” “of America,” “of California,” and enumerated other similar terms.
 - c) Replacing the name of the candidate-controlled committee with the name of the candidate and office, if the candidate is a current officeholder.
 - d) Authorizing numerous common abbreviations, including “&” for “and,” “Fed.” for “Federation,” and state abbreviations (e.g., CA for California).
 - e) Authorizing the FPPC to approve additional abbreviations that are widely recognized and unambiguous in meaning.
- 3) Mandates, among many formatting changes, that disclosures in print advertisements, including billboards, appear as applicable in the following order:
 - a) The notice that the advertisement was created using artificial intelligence. This notice shall be set off from other disclosures by half a blank line;
 - b) That the advertisement was not paid for by the candidate;
 - c) Who paid for the advertisement;
 - d) Top contributors, which shall be listed in bold, displayed with the phrase, “Ad Committee’s Top Funders,” which shall be underlined.
- 4) Requires, for billboards and other printed advertisements that are larger than those designed to be individually distributed:
 - a) The names of top contributors be separated by bullet points or numbering, instead of commas, and appear on one horizontal line if possible.
 - b) Each line of the disclosure must take up at least the lesser of 5 percent of the width or the height of the billboard or other printed material.
- 5) Shortens the disclosure on an advertisement paid for by an independent expenditure to read, “Not paid for by candidate” or “Not paid for by a candidate for this office,” as applicable.

BACKGROUND

The Disclose Act and Other Previous Legislation. AB 249 (Mullin), Chapter 546, Statutes of 2017, which is commonly known as the “Disclose Act,” significantly changed the content and format of disclosure statements required on campaign advertisements, in order to make the disclosures more prominent. AB 249 also established new requirements to determine which contributors must be listed on campaign advertisements.

Since AB 249’s enactment, several other bills have modified the content and format of the required disclosure statements. Notably, AB 2188 (Mullin), Chapter 754, Statutes of 2018, required online platforms that sell political ads to make specified information about those political ads available to the public and made various changes to the format for disclosures required on electronic media ads. AB 201 (Cervantes), Chapter 555, Statutes of 2019, required a text message that supports or opposes a candidate or ballot measure to disclose the name of the candidate or committee that paid for the text message and, in certain circumstances, the top contributors to the committee.

The Disclose Act’s approach was also extended to apply to initiative, referendum, and recall petitions with the passage of SB 47 (Allen), Chapter 563, Statutes of 2019. Among other things, SB 47 required that an official top funders disclosure be made either on the petition itself or on a separate sheet that identifies the name of the committee and any qualifying top contributors.

Most recently, SB 1360 (Umberg), Chapter 887, Statutes of 2022, changed the text and formatting of required disclosures on petitions, electronic media, and video campaign advertisements. It also required the disclosure of top contributors funding the advertisements on electronic media advertisements.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author’s Statement. The current disclosure size requirements for political advertisements on billboards have created unintended consequences that are hampering effective and affordable political advertising in this medium. They also reduce the legibility of the disclosure information, making it difficult for viewers to quickly identify sponsors while maintaining the necessary transparency. This bill seeks to implement modest adjustments to ensure that the actual political advertisement can still be seen.
- 2) Arguments in Support. The California Outdoor Advertising Association, the bill’s sponsor, states that:

This bill provides a necessary and balanced solution to ensure both transparency and readability in political advertisements while preserving the effectiveness of billboard messaging.

California’s existing laws require political advertisements to disclose their sponsors to promote transparency and inform voters. However, in the case of yard signs or billboards (particularly for committees supporting or opposing a candidate or proposition), the regulations have inadvertently resulted in

disclosures that can consume up to 50% of the total space on the sign. For a committee, the top three contributors must be listed, each taking up a minimum of 5% of the sign's height/space, which can crowd out the messaging of the advertisement itself. This can make advertisements difficult to read and reduce the viability of billboards as a means of political communication. The disproportionate size of the disclosure text undermines the intent of the law by impairing legibility.

- 3) Technical amendment. When amending the bill in the future, the author may wish to correct a minor omission in the bill, as follows:

On page 7, line 26, after “on” add “a”

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	71 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	15 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsors: California State Outdoor Advertising Association
California Clean Money Campaign

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1079	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Ávila Farías		
Version:	7/3/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	No
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Civil appeals: stay of enforcement

DIGEST

This bill specifies that a superior court order must be enforced during a pending appeal of a case brought under laws relating to local electoral district boundaries, except as specified.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Stops the enforcement of a judgement or order from a superior court during a pending appeal of the court's decision, except in very limited specified instances.
- 2) Creates the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) to ensure that at-large elections in local jurisdictions do not impair the ability of a protected class of voters to elect candidates of its choice or to influence the outcome of an election. The CVRA generally requires the creation of electoral districts for the governing board members of local jurisdictions.
- 3) Specifies, pursuant to the Fair and Inclusive Redistricting for Municipalities And Political Subdivisions (FAIR MAPS) Act, the criteria and processes that local jurisdictions must use when they adjust the boundaries of the electoral districts for members of the jurisdictions' governing bodies. These include substantial public hearing and outreach requirements.

This bill:

- 1) Expresses the intent of the Legislature to ensure that remedial measures ordered by a superior court to address violations of the CVRA or the FAIR MAPS Act are implemented promptly, regardless of any appeal, except where the superior court determines that such prompt implementation is antithetical to the CVRA, the FAIR MAPS Act, or the orderly administration of the state's elections.
- 2) Specifies that the perfecting of an appeal shall not stay the judgement of the superior court, unless it orders otherwise, if the superior court finds that:

- a) A jurisdiction's at-large method of election violates or is likely to violate the CVRA.
 - b) A jurisdiction's election district boundaries violate or are likely to violate the FAIR MAPS Act.
- 3) Permits, notwithstanding 2) above, the enforcement of a judgment or order from the trial court while an appeal is pending, if the Secretary of State files a certification in the trial court declaring that the order or judgment is necessary for the orderly administration of the state's elections.
 - 4) Requires a jurisdiction that has been sued, but pursuant to 2) above the court stays the order or judgement, to reimburse the county elections official for administering elections that later result from a judgment or order of the trial court or from orders issued by a court of appeal.
 - 5) Exempts from its provisions a judgment or order entered in an action or a proceeding commenced on or before January 1, 2026 that includes at least one CVRA or FAIR MAPS Act cause of action.

BACKGROUND

California Voting Rights Act. SB 976 (Polanco), Chapter 129, Statutes of 2002, enacted the CVRA to address racially polarized voting in at-large elections for local offices in California and use district-based elections instead, allowing the political will of minority communities to be expressed. An at-large method of election can dilute the voting rights of minority communities, if the majority typically votes to support candidates who differ from the candidates who are preferred by minority communities.

When this occurs, breaking a local jurisdiction up into districts can result in districts in which a minority community can elect a candidate of its choice or otherwise have the ability to influence the outcome of an election. Accordingly, the CVRA prohibits using an at-large election in a city, county, or other political subdivision in a manner that impairs the ability of a protected class of voters, such as Latino voters, to elect candidates of its choice or to influence the outcome of an election.

The first case brought under the CVRA was filed in 2004, when the City of Modesto challenged the constitutionality of the law. Ultimately, the City of Modesto appealed the case all the way to the United States Supreme Court, which in October 2007 let stand a lower court ruling upholding the law. Since that time, hundreds of local jurisdictions in California have converted or are in the process of converting from an at-large method of election to district-based elections.

CVRA and Santa Monica Litigation. The City of Santa Monica has a seven-member city council with members elected at-large to staggered four-year terms. In April 2016, the Pico Neighborhood Association and others sued the City of Santa Monica, alleging that the at-large method of electing city council members violated the CVRA and the equal protection clause of the California Constitution.

In 2019, the Los Angeles County Superior Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs on both

counts and ordered the city to adopt district-based elections. Citing the long standing dilution of Latino voting rights in Santa Monica, the Superior Court ordered all future elections for seats on the city council be district-based elections pursuant to a district map outlined by the court, ordered that a district-based special election for all seven seats on the city council be held in July 2019, and prohibited each existing city council member from continuing to serve on the council after August 15, 2019, unless the member was elected to a seat at the district-based special election in July 2019.

The City of Santa Monica appealed the decision, which automatically stopped the orders of the Superior Court from being enforced. The Court of Appeals subsequently reversed the Superior Court's decision, finding that Santa Monica's at-large method of electing city council members did not violate the CVRA nor the California Constitution.

The plaintiffs appealed that ruling to the California Supreme Court, which granted review to determine what constitutes dilution of a protected class's ability to elect the candidates of its choice or to influence the outcome of an election within the meaning of the CVRA. In August 2023, the California Supreme Court ruled the Court of Appeal "misconstrued" the CVRA. The Supreme Court did not reinstate the Superior Court's orders. The Supreme Court expressly stated that it was not expressing a view on whether Santa Monica's at-large voting system was consistent with the CVRA. Instead, the Supreme Court remanded the case for further proceedings under the correct standard of review. As a result, the case is pending on remand in the Court of Appeal.

Since the Los Angeles Superior Court's 2019 ruling, Santa Monica has held three municipal elections to elect city council members, all three of which were conducted using the at-large election system that the Superior Court found to be in violation of the CVRA.

FAIR MAPS Act. AB 849 (Bonta), Chapter 557, Statutes of 2019, created the FAIR MAPS Act, which revised and standardized the criteria and process counties and cities use when they adjust the boundaries of the electoral districts for members of the jurisdictions' governing bodies. AB 849 required counties and cities to comply with substantial public hearing and outreach requirements as part of the process for adjusting the boundaries of electoral districts. Prior to the enactment of AB 849, the rules that govern the local redistricting process generally had not been changed in decades.

In 2023, AB 764 (Bryan), Chapter 343, Statutes of 2023 added special districts, school districts, community college districts, and county boards of education to criteria and process requirements of the FAIR MAPS Act. AB 764 also increased the public hearing and outreach requirements that apply to all local jurisdictions as they adjust the boundaries for districts for members of their governing boards.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. This bill would have a positive impact on the ability of underserved and marginalized communities to access the justice system, as it increases the practicality of accessing the justice system. If cities or districts are able to delay justice to marginalized and underserved communities by simply filing a Notice of Appeal, it is not practical to those marginalized and underserved

communities to utilize the justice system, because, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said in his Letter from a Birmingham jail: “justice delayed is justice denied.” Why would members of marginalized and underserved communities use the justice system when it is denying them justice?

- 2) Arguments in Opposition. Opponents of this bill come from various neighborhood associations in the City of Santa Monica. All opponents previously supported the bill, until amendments on May 19, 2025 made it clear that the bill would not apply to the situation in their city over which one of the opponents, the Pico Neighborhood Association, sued in 2016. The Wilshire Montana Neighborhood Coalition writes:

Our City leaders have chosen to spend millions of dollars ever since 2018, fighting district elections and will continue to do so though we are in financial straits. This bill as amended would create an exception for the City of Santa Monica if it continues to appeal against the (Los Angeles) Superior Court ruling supporting district elections for our small city. Ironically this bill is about doing exactly the opposite for all other cities, not allowing them to use the appellate process to maintain at large elections.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 764 (Bryan), Chapter 343, Statutes of 2023, added special districts, school districts, community college districts, and county boards of education to criteria and process requirements of the FAIR MAPS Act.

AB 849 (Bonta), Chapter 557, Statutes of 2019, also known as the FAIR MAPS Act, revised and standardized the criteria and process to be used by counties and cities when they adjust the boundaries of the electoral districts

SB 976 (Polanco), Chapter 129, Statutes of 2002, created the CVRA to ensure that at-large elections in local jurisdictions do not impair the ability of a protected class of voters to elect candidates of its choice or to influence the outcome of an election.

PRIOR ACTION

Senate Judiciary Committee:	10 - 1
Assembly Floor:	55 -16
Assembly Elections Commimtte:	4 - 2
Assembly Judiciary Committee:	7 - 3

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: None received

Oppose: Pico Neighborhood Association
Santa Monica Northeast Neighbors

Santa Monica United
Wilshire Montana Neighborhood Coalition

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1164	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Ransom		
Version:	6/24/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Scott Matsumoto		

Subject: Elections: Voter Bill of Rights

DIGEST

This bill updates the Voter Bill of Rights (VBOR) to revise the language about replacement ballots.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the VBOR to be printed in the state voter information guide sent to all voters with printed copies supplied by the Secretary of State (SOS) for conspicuous posting both inside and outside of every polling place.
- 2) Requires the VBOR to contain information about voting, voting procedures, language access, and election fraud.
- 3) Allows the SOS to do both of the following:
 - a) Develop regulations to implement and clarify the VBOR.
 - b) Revise the wording of the VBOR as necessary to ensure the use of clear and concise language free from technical terms.
- 4) Requires an elections official to provide a replacement ballot to any voter upon receipt of a replacement ballot request from the voter.
- 5) Requires an elections official to provide a replacement ballot to the voter's representative upon receipt of a written request, on a form prescribed by the SOS, signed by the voter under penalty of perjury, requesting that a ballot be provided to the voter's representative. An elections official may not provide a ballot until both of the following occur:
 - a) The elections official compares the signature on the written request with the signature or signatures in the voter's record.
 - b) The authorized representative signs an acknowledgment of receipt of the voter's ballot.

- 6) Requires an elections official to keep a record of each vote by mail (VBM) ballot sent to and received from a voter and to verify, prior to counting any duplicate ballot, that the voter has not already voted.
- 7) Permits instructions to voters that are printed on the ballot to include warnings and checks to help voters mark their ballot correctly and avoid errors.
- 8) Requires a voter, if they spoil or deface a ballot, to at once return it to the poll worker and receive another ballot. A voter is prohibited from receiving more than a total of three ballots, including their original ballot.
- 9) Requires, beneath the VBOR, a toll-free telephone number be listed for voters to use if they have been denied a voting right or to report election fraud or misconduct.

This bill:

- 1) Requires the VBOR to inform a voter that they can request a replacement ballot and requires the following specified language to be included in the VBOR:
 - a) You have the right to request and receive a replacement ballot from a poll worker or your local elections official before the closing of the polls under the following circumstances:
 - i) You do not have your ballot.
 - ii) Your ballot has been damaged.
 - iii) You made a mistake on your ballot and have not yet cast it.
- 2) Modifies the placement of a toll-free telephone number for voters to use if they have been denied a voting right or to report election fraud or misconduct from beneath the VBOR to anywhere on the VBOR.

BACKGROUND

Voter Bill of Rights. In 2003, AB 177 (Oropeza), Chapter 425, Statutes of 2003, established the VBOR and enumerated the rights of voters. The VBOR includes the following:

- You have the right to cast a ballot if you are a valid registered voter. A valid registered voter means a United States citizen who is a resident in this state, who is at least 18 years of age and not serving a state or federal prison term for conviction of a felony, and who is registered to vote at their current residence address.
- You have the right to cast a provisional ballot if your name is not listed on the voting rolls.
- You have the right to cast a ballot if you are present and in line at the polling place before the close of the polls.
- You have the right to cast a secret ballot free from intimidation.

- You have the right to receive a new ballot if, before casting your ballot, you believe you made a mistake. If at any time before you finally cast your ballot, you feel you have made a mistake, you have the right to exchange the spoiled ballot for a new ballot. VBM voters may also request and receive a new ballot if they return their spoiled ballot to an elections official before the closing of the polls.
- You have the right to receive assistance in casting your ballot, if you are unable to vote without assistance.
- You have the right to return a completed VBM ballot to any precinct in the county.
- You have the right to election materials in another language, if there are sufficient residents in your precinct to warrant production.
- You have the right to ask questions about election procedures and observe the election process. You have the right to ask questions of the precinct board and election officials regarding election procedures and to receive an answer or be directed to the appropriate official for an answer. However, if persistent questioning disrupts the execution of their duties, the precinct board or election officials may discontinue responding to questions.
- You have the right to report any illegal or fraudulent activity to a local elections official or to the SOS's office.

The SOS makes the VBOR available before each election and on Election Day, and the SOS prints the VBOR verbatim in the state voter information guide and on posters or other printed materials included in precinct supplies. The VBOR is also posted on the SOS website in various languages.

In 2015, SB 505 (Mendoza), Chapter 236, Statutes of 2015, authorized the SOS to revise the wording of the VBOR as necessary to ensure that the language used is clear and concise and free from technical terms. Prior to SB 505, the SOS had limited authority to ensure that election materials were prepared and provided in plain language. SB 505 formally allowed the SOS to inform voters using plain language text to describe the VBOR.

Replacement VBM Ballots. Existing law permits a registered voter to request a replacement ballot if they did not receive their VBM ballot, or lost or destroyed the original ballot. In order to receive a replacement ballot, a voter must submit a request or application for a replacement ballot to their county elections office by phone, email, fax, or other electronic means. Once the application is verified and approved, a replacement ballot will be mailed to the voter. Most county election officials make the replacement ballot application available on their county elections website.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. As the most populous state in the country, California faces a significant undertaking when we hold our elections. While our election officials work tirelessly to ensure that our elections are secure and the voice of our voters is heard, voters themselves are in need of greater clarity when it comes to their rights. This bill provides that clarity for our millions of voters, ensuring they know their rights to replacement ballots when theirs are lost, destroyed, not received, or could not be surrendered. It is a straightforward bill that ensures voters know their rights to replacement ballots.

- 2) Wordy Wording – Suggested Amendment. As previously mentioned, the SOS has the authority to modify the wording of the VBOR. This bill adds language to the text of the VBOR relating to replacement ballots. The language itself does not necessarily need to be taken verbatim and printed on the VBOR. In fact, the downloadable versions of the VBOR, the language is not exactly what is stated in statute. This means that the SOS does attempt to make the VBOR more readable and understandable for voters. With this in mind, the language currently in the bill could be simpler since the ability to replace a ballot is already in statute and the VBOR simply reiterates existing laws relating to voting rights.

The Center for Civic Design shares best practices for civic design for plain language, accessibility, information design, and civic research in an effort to make elections easier to run, support innovation, and invite participation in elections. Among the research, the Center for Civic Design has best practices into what works in voter education brochures and flyers. One of the highlights is to write clearly for voters by avoiding, or explaining, election terminology because “seemingly simple words can be confusing if voters do not understand their meaning in the elections context.”

Committee staff recommends the following amendment in order to simplify the text of the VBOR:

- (a)(5) You have the right to request and receive a replacement ballot from a poll worker or your local elections official before the closing of the polls under the following circumstances:
- (A) You do not have your ballot.
 - (B) Your ballot has been damaged.
 - (C) You made a mistake on your ballot and have not **yet cast submitted** it.

- 3) Flexibility in Placement of Specific Text. Current law specifies that a toll-free telephone number be listed for voters to use if they have been denied a voting right or to report election fraud or misconduct. This telephone number is required to be beneath the VBOR. In the downloadable versions of the VBOR, the telephone number is placed to the right of the VBOR. This bill provides flexibility for the SOS to provide a more readable VBOR by removing the specific placement of the telephone number and, instead, allows the placement of the information to be anywhere on the VBOR.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 1072 (Pellerin) of 2025 requires the SOS to develop uniform standards and guidelines for a voter to correct mistakes when voting.

SB 505 (Mendoza), Chapter 236, Statutes of 2015, authorized the SOS to revise the wording of the VBOR as necessary to ensure that the language used is clear and concise and free from technical terms.

AB 177 (Oropeza), Chapter 425, Statutes of 2003, established the VBOR and enumerated the rights of voters.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	78 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	14 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.

Support: California Association of Clerks and Election Officials
California Environmental Voters
Election Integrity Project California, Inc.
League of Women Voters of California
NAACP California-Hawaii State Conference
One individual

Oppose: None received

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1214	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Patterson		
Version:	4/22/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Scott Matsumoto		

Subject: Elections: official canvass

DIGEST

This bill requires election officials to post updated election results during the official canvass at least twice per week, instead of at least once per week.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Defines “semiofficial canvass” as the public process of collecting, processing, and tallying ballots and, for state or statewide elections, reporting results to the Secretary of State on Election Night. The semifinal official canvass may include some or all of the vote by mail (VBM) and provisional vote totals.
- 2) Requires an elections official to conduct a semifinal official canvass of each election by tabulating VBM and precinct ballots and compiling the results. The semifinal official canvass begins immediately upon the closing of the polls and continues until all precincts are accounted for.
- 3) Defines “official canvass” as the public process of processing and tallying all ballots received in an election, including, but not limited to, provisional ballots and VBM ballots not included in the semifinal official canvass. The official canvass also includes the process of reconciling ballots, attempting to prohibit duplicate voting by VBM and provisional voters, and performance of the manual tally of one percent of all precincts.
- 4) Requires an official canvass of the election to commence no later than the Thursday following the election. The official canvass must be open to the public and, for state elections, concludes in a report of results to the Secretary of State. The official canvass must be continued daily (except for Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays) for not less than six hours each day until completed.
- 5) Requires an elections official, beginning no later than the Thursday following an election, to post updated information regarding the election on their website at least once per week, unless certain conditions are met. The update must include the following information:

- a) Updated results for any candidate or measure appearing on the ballot.
- b) The number of ballots processed and an estimated number of outstanding ballots remaining unprocessed for each of the following categories:
 - i) Ballots voted at a polling place.
 - ii) VBM ballots received on or before Election Day.
 - iii) VBM ballots received after Election Day, provisional ballots, and conditional registration ballots.
- c) The date and time when it is expected that the next results will be posted.

This bill requires election officials to post updated election results during the official canvass at least twice per week, instead of at least once per week.

BACKGROUND

Semiofficial Canvass, the Official Canvass, and Updated Results. Existing law allows election officials to begin processing VBM ballots before Election Day, provided election officials do not access or release election results before 8 p.m. on Election Day. Election officials typically process most VBM ballots that have arrived in the weeks prior to the week of the election. Most VBM ballots get to election officials on the day before Election Day, on Election Day, and in the days immediately following Election Day.

Once the polls close on Election Day, election officials begin the semiofficial canvass. The semiofficial canvass is the process of collecting, processing, and tallying ballots and, for state or statewide elections, reporting results to the Secretary of State on Election Night. The first batch of results election officials release shortly after the polls close on Election Day are primarily VBM ballots the elections official received and processed before Election Day. State law requires election officials to update election results at least every two hours during the semiofficial official canvass. The subsequent updates that follow primarily are ballots that were cast at in-person voting locations on Election Day.

The vast amount of other ballots are tabulated as part of the official canvass and must begin no later than the Thursday after Election Day. This includes VBM ballots, provisional ballots, and other ballots that require additional verification or processing.

AB 63 (Cervantes), Chapter 514, Statutes of 2023, among other provisions, required election officials to publicly update election results at least once a week during the official canvass, beginning the Thursday after the election. Prior to AB 63, state law did not expressly require election results to be updated on any particular schedule during the official canvass. AB 63 was enacted, in part, due to a recognition that there was a stronger public interest in requiring regular updates to election results during the official canvass in light of the fact that a smaller percentage of ballots were being included in the “election night results.”

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. Trust in democracy is inseparable from trust in our election system. Unfortunately, given the length of time it takes to accurately count ballots, a shadow of doubt has been cast onto our process. This bill takes a small step in restoring trust in our election system by simply requiring election officials to update the public and the media at least twice a week on how many votes are left to be counted. This simple change increases transparency and allows democracy to flourish.

- 2) Seeing Double? At this committee's hearing on April 29, 2025, this committee heard and passed SB 3 (Cervantes) of 2025. Among the provisions of the bill, SB 3 contains a requirement that election officials post updated election results at least twice before the Thursday following Election Day and twice per week thereafter on their websites, instead of at least once per week. SB 3 also contains provisions relating to how the information is posted on an elections official's website. Provisions in SB 3 and this bill are similar and amend the same code section, chaptering amendments will be needed prior to both bills being approved by the Legislature.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

SB 3 (Cervantes) of 2025, among other provisions relating to the signature curing process, requires election officials post updated election results at least twice before the Thursday following Election Day and twice per week thereafter on their websites, instead of at least once per week. The bill is pending in the Assembly Committee on Elections.

AB 63 (Cervantes), Chapter 514, Statutes of 2023, among other provisions, required election officials to update election results at least once a week until the results are complete unless certain conditions are met.

SB 718 (Wilk) of 2023 would have required unprocessed ballot reports prepared by county election officials to include the number of VBM ballots that have been processed but not counted because the identification envelope is missing the voter's signature or has a signature that does not compare to the signature on file. The bill failed passage in the Assembly Committee on Elections.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	71 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	15 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0 Reconsideration
Assembly Elections Committee:	2 - 4

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: California Association of Clerks and Election Officials
Election Integrity Project California, Inc.
One individual

Oppose: None received

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1370	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Patterson		
Version:	6/23/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: State Legislature: nondisclosure agreements.

DIGEST

This bill prohibits a Member of the California Legislature from entering into, or requesting another individual to enter into, a nondisclosure agreement (NDA) related to the drafting, negotiation, or discussion of proposed legislation.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Provides in the California Constitution that the people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business and, therefore, the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny.
- 2) Establishes a Legislative Code of Ethics, which regulates the conduct of Members and employees of the Legislature, including prohibiting a Member or employee of the Legislature, while serving as such, from having any interest, financial or otherwise, engaging in any business or transaction or professional activity, or incurring any obligation of any nature, that is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of the person's duties in the public interest and the person's responsibilities under state law.
- 3) Provides that a person who knowingly and willfully violates any provision of the Legislative Code of Ethics is guilty of a misdemeanor, and every person who conspires to violate it is guilty of a felony.

This bill:

- 1) Prohibits a Member of the Legislature from entering into, or asking another person to enter into, an NDA relating to the drafting, negotiation, or discussion of proposed legislation, except an NDA that prevents only the disclosure of trade secrets (confidential processes and practices of a business), financial information, or proprietary information.
- 2) Adds this prohibition to the Legislative Code of Ethics.
- 3) Makes any NDA that violates 1) of this bill above unenforceable.

- 4) Excludes legislative staff from this prohibition.
- 5) Defines:
 - a) “Discussion” as direct or indirect communications engaged in by individuals for the purpose of reaching a decision regarding proposed legislation.
 - b) “Drafting” as developing language for proposed legislation.
 - c) “Negotiation” as any form of direct or indirect communication whereby those with opposing interests discuss the form of proposed legislation to resolve their dispute.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author’s Statement. People can only have faith in a government to the extent that they trust it. When elected officials sign NDAs, it not only creates a barricade to information that should be publicly available, it creates a level of distrust in the foundations of our democracy. This bill offers a simple, common-sense solution: it prevents legislators from signing NDAs pertaining to legislative matters, but permits safeguarding protected information such as trade secrets. This bill provides necessary transparency for the public when it comes to decisions that impact legislation and the expenditures of tax dollars.
- 2) What’s an NDA? An NDA is a legal contract between two or more parties intended to protect confidential information. It restricts who can access this information and what they can do with it. NDAs can cover a wide range of confidential information, including trade secrets, business plans, legal settlements, customer lists, etc. NDAs create a confidential relationship between the parties. NDAs can be mutual, where both parties are restricted from sharing information, or unilateral, where only one party is bound by the confidentiality clause.
- 3) Rumored Use of NDAs. AB 257 (Holden), Chapter 246, Statutes of 2022, proposed to establish a Fast Food Council within the Department of Industrial Relations. After its passage, opponents of AB 257 qualified a referendum against the bill, which suspended the operation of AB 257 until California voters could vote on whether to affirm or reject the law. This was expected to occur on the November 2024 ballot.

In 2023, proponents and opponents of AB 257 entered into negotiations over potential changes to the measure. Those negotiations led to an agreement under which changes would be made to AB 257 that were contingent upon the proponents withdrawing their referendum by January 1, 2024. The negotiated changes to AB 257 were codified in AB 1228 (Holden), Chapter 262, Statutes of 2023. The Secretary of State announced on December 29, 2023, that the proponents had withdrawn the referendum.

In 2024, news reports, citing sources close to the AB 1228 negotiations, stated that unspecified parties involved in these negotiations were asked to sign an NDA to protect the confidentiality of the negotiations. The news coverage, however, provided no reason to believe that any public official, including Legislators,

legislative staff, the Governor, or staff to the Governor, signed an NDA in connection with negotiations; nor does it appear that any public official requested anyone to sign an NDA in connection with those negotiations or to otherwise be bound by an NDA when involved in legislative negotiations. Nevertheless, concerns that such an agreement could have been made and could have included Members of the Legislature apparently motivated this bill.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 2654 (Vince Fong) of 2024 would have prohibited lobbyists, specified public officials, and specified employees from entering into NDAs related to negotiations about legislation. The bill failed passage on a vote of 2 - 1 in the Assembly Committee on Elections.

PRIOR ACTION

Senate Judiciary Committee:	13 - 0
Assembly Floor:	71 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	15 - 0
Assembly Judiciary Committee:	12 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: California Alliance of Family Owned Businesses
Oakland Privacy

Oppose: None received

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1249	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Wilson		
Version:	5/29/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Scott Matsumoto		

Subject: Early voting: satellite locations.

DIGEST

This bill requires a county that does not conduct their elections using the Voter's Choice Act (VCA) to provide at least one early voting location.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Permits any voter using a vote by mail (VBM) ballot, prior to the close of the polls on Election Day, to vote the ballot at the office of the elections official. An elections official's office may include satellite locations. A notice of satellite locations must be made by the elections official through a general news release, issued not later than 14 days prior to voting at the satellite location. If there is a declared emergency or disaster in the county, the notice must be made not later than 48 hours prior to voting at the satellite location.
- 2) Requires a VBM ballot voted at a satellite location to be placed in a VBM voter identification envelope to be completed by the voter.
- 3) Allows a voter to return their VBM ballot in-person at the polling place designated for the voter's home precinct or at a vote center without placing the ballot into a ballot identification envelope, if certain conditions are met.
- 4) Authorizes any county, pursuant to the VCA, to conduct elections in which every registered voter is mailed a ballot with vote centers and ballot drop-off locations available prior to and on Election Day, instead of operating polling places for the election. The VCA also requires a number of planning and outreach requirements for counties adopting and conducting.

This bill:

- 1) Specifies the ability for any voter to vote their VBM ballot at their elections official's office or satellite location beginning 29 days before Election Day.

- 2) Requires a county that does not conduct its elections using the VCA to provide at least one early voting location on the Saturday before Election Day. This location must be open for at least six hours.
- 3) Requires county election officials to do the following at their elections offices, satellite locations, and early voting locations:
 - a) Provide at least one voting unit for voters with disabilities that is certified or conditionally certified by the Secretary of State (SOS).
 - b) Permit a voter to vote their VBM ballot without placing it in a VBM envelope.
 - c) Provide notice of satellite locations not later than two weeks before voting may occur at the satellite location.
- 4) Requires election officials to permit voters to do the following at early voting locations:
 - a) Return the voter's VBM ballot without placing it in a VBM envelope.
 - b) Register to vote, update a voter registration, and vote.
 - c) Receive and vote a provisional ballot.
 - d) Receive a replacement ballot.
 - e) Vote a regular, provisional, or replacement ballot using an accessible voting machine or equipment.
- 5) Repeals a provision that permits the office of an elections official from being considered a satellite location.
- 6) Repeals provisions that require a VBM ballot voted at a satellite location to be placed in a VBM ballot identification envelope. A voter may vote their VBM ballot, without the identification envelope, in person at the office of the elections official, a satellite location, polling place, or a vote center if certain conditions are met.

BACKGROUND

Voter's Choice Act. SB 450 (Allen), Chapter 832, Statutes of 2016, enacted the VCA and provided an additional model for counties to administer elections. This election model provides every registered voter a VBM ballot and allows a voter to visit any voting location, known as vote centers, within the voter's county prior to and on Election Day to vote or seek assistance with voting.

As part of the VCA, for regularly scheduled elections, one vote center is required for every 50,000 registered voters and needs to be open from the 10th day to the 4th day prior to the election. One vote center needs to be open for every 10,000 registered voters from the 3rd day prior to the election through Election Day. A minimum of two vote centers are required in jurisdictions with a population below 50,000 and 10,000,

respectively. For special elections, one vote center is required for every 60,000 registered voters from the 10th day to the day prior to the election, and one vote center for every 30,000 registered voters on Election Day.

Voters may visit any vote center in the voter's county to return a VBM ballot, register to vote, and vote. Vote centers also need to be accessible to voters with disabilities and provide language assistance in a way consistent with current state and federal law. Finally, SB 450 required a ballot drop-off location for every 15,000 registered voters and available from the 28th day before the election through Election Day.

Following the enactment of SB 450, five counties elected to change their election model to the VCA for the 2018 elections. In 2020, 10 counties made the switch and in 2022, 12 more counties opted to conduct their elections using the VCA model. For the November 2024 statewide presidential general election, 29 counties conducted their elections using the VCA model. For upcoming elections, Imperial County has indicated it will also use the VCA model.

Early Voting Statistics at Vote Centers. As previously mentioned, VCA counties are required to provide early voting options for voters. Below is a chart using data provided by the SOS on the number of in-person voters in VCA counties who voted a regular ballot, voted a provisional ballot, or used conditional voter registration (e.g. same-day registration). It should be noted that the total number of voters vary by election year because different numbers of counties used the VCA model in 2020, 2022, and 2024.

In-Person Voters in VCA Counties (Regular, Provisional, Conditional Voter Registration)							
	2020 Primary	2020 General	2021 Recall	2022 Primary	2022 General	2024 Primary	2024 General
E-4 (Friday)	15,147	173,212	18,442	4,712	12,684	6,508	48,316
E-3 (Saturday)	48,118	113,570	38,487	13,783	37,002	21,882	145,833
E-2 (Sunday)	51,018	108,760	34,190	16,656	45,372	23,658	134,368
E-1 (Monday)	75,187	235,032	105,476	42,144	103,566	64,346	305,016
Election Day*	1,130,332	658,469	407,745	398,684	835,761	554,895	1,590,410

*Includes votes recorded on or after Election Day. Even though these votes are cast on Election Day, it may be recorded by election officials on a subsequent day.

Non-VCA Counties. With Imperial County planning on using the VCA model for future elections, there will be 28 counties conducting their elections using the traditional polling place model or an all-VBM model. This includes Alpine, Colusa, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Glenn, Inyo, Kern, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Plumas, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, and Yuba counties. Of the 28 counties, Alpine and Sierra counties conduct their elections solely by mail. The remaining 26 counties use polling places where there are polling locations for every

1,000 voters or, if consolidated precincts are used, one polling location for up to 6,000 voters.

While there is not a requirement to provide early voting opportunities to voters in non-VCA counties, all counties generally provide an in-person voting opportunity at their elections office before Election Day. For example, according to data from the SOS's website, for the 2024 presidential general election, Contra Costa County had six early voting locations, including the county elections official's office in Martinez. The elections office was open on weekdays from October 7 to November 4 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The office was also open on Saturday, November 2, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The other five locations were open November 1 and November 4 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and open Saturday, November 2, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. This bill seeks to address the gap for early voting opportunities between VCA counties and non-VCA counties by ensuring that voters in non-VCA counties have access to at least one early voting location on the Saturday before statewide elections. This bill will provide critical flexibility for those who may face challenges on Election Day due to work, childcare, transportation, or other barriers. Its passage would help increase voter participation and ensure that every Californian has equal access to voting.
- 2) Polling from the Institute of Governmental Studies. On July 1, 2025, the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley, released the results of a poll about early voting and vote centers. The poll surveyed 6,474 registered voters in California, including 856 voters who voted in person. While 48 percent of in-person voters said they prefer to vote on Election Day, 46 percent preferred early voting options. One of the questions asked, "When you vote at an in-person voting site, what time of day do you prefer to vote?" Of the in-person respondents, 86 percent said on a weekday (14 percent before 9 a.m., 44 percent between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., and 28 percent after 5 p.m.) and 14 percent said on the weekend.
- 3) Why Saturday? This bill requires county election officials to provide an early voting location on the Saturday before Election Day in non-VCA counties. The author contends that having a Saturday option for voting provides needed flexibility who may find it challenging to vote during the week.

As noted previously, the IGS poll signals that there is a greater desire for voting options during the week than on the weekend. The SOS data on early in-person voting in VCA counties affirms the IGS polling data. With 29 counties representing over 75 percent of the state's electorate for elections in 2024, data on when a voter visits a vote center to vote could be a good indicator on what could happen in non-VCA counties. In-person voting on the day before Election Day (Monday) is substantially higher than any other early voting day. Monday's in-person totals is more than double Saturday's turnout in six of the last seven statewide elections. When looking at data for Sundays, it was comparable to Saturdays and had a higher turnout than Saturday in three of the last four statewide elections.

- 4) Early Voting Locations, Satellite Locations, and Election Offices. This bill uses various terminology, such as “office of the elections official,” “satellite location,” and “early voting location.” This bill also repeals language that explicitly permitted the office of the elections official to be a satellite location. Satellite locations could include a pop-up event or sending a Vote-Mobile to a particular location for a few hours. It is unclear whether the elections official’s office is considered a satellite location under the bill.

Election officials are also required to provide notice of any satellite location. It is also unclear whether the same notice requirement applies to the election’s office, if the satellite location is not the same as the elections office. The author should consider making clarifications to stem any potential confusion when implementing the bill’s requirements.

- 5) Only Statewide Elections? This bill requires at least one early voting location in non-VCA counties for statewide elections, but not for a standalone local election or special election. In these elections, an early voting location may be beneficial considering the time and distance a voter may have to travel to get to an elections office to vote early. Additionally, voters may eventually become accustomed to having early voting as an option, but see that the same option is unavailable depending on the type of election. The committee should consider whether the bill should be expanded to apply to any election.
- 6) Language Access. This bill requires early voting locations to have an accessible voting machine to allow voters with a disability access to voting. This bill is silent on language services provided at these early voting locations. On one hand, having language access increases voter access. On the other, it may be difficult to provide every required language at a single early voting location.
- 7) Effect on the VCA. One of the pillars and requirements of the VCA is early voting options for voters. By requiring non-VCA counties to have at least one early voting location, the bill would bring these counties one step closer to implementing VCA. This could potentially make it easier for counties to transition from a polling place county or an all-mail county to a VCA county. Alternatively, VCA counties may view this bill as a way to maintain services and opt to move from vote centers back to polling places.
- 8) Suggested Amendment – The Start of Early Voting. This bill specifies the ability for any voter to vote their VBM ballot at the office of the elections official or satellite location beginning 29 days before Election Day. Pursuant to AB 49 (Cervantes), Chapter 553, Statutes of 2019, county election officials are permitted to begin mailing VBM ballots earlier than the 29th day before Election Day. This could create a gap where a voter may have their VBM ballot before the 29th day before Election Day, want to vote in person at the elections office, and be unable to vote. Committee staff recommends replacing the phrase to “beginning 29 days before the day of the election” to “no later than 29 days before the day of the election.” This amendment would provide the flexibility and create a floor rather than establish a ceiling.

9) Arguments in Support. The SOS, the bill's sponsor, stated, in support:

...a significant disparity exists between VCA and non-VCA counties regarding early voting options. Voters in non-VCA counties face limited opportunities to cast their ballots before Election Day, creating barriers for those with work obligations, transportation challenges, or other conflicts.

[...]

These changes will significantly enhance voter convenience and accessibility while minimizing financial and logistical burdens on county election officials. Our democracy is strongest when all eligible voters can participate fully in the electoral process.

10) Arguments in Opposition. Election Integrity Project California, Inc. (EIPCa) submitted a letter in opposition to this bill. While EIPCa notes that establishing early voting locations is a good idea, this bill may negatively impact geographically large counties and cause concerns around when the public is notified about early voting locations. Specifically, EIPCa recommends the following amendments:

- a) The SOS evaluate qualifying counties for ease or difficulty of voter access, and assign a number of satellite locations deemed necessary by circumstances unique to them.
- b) Provide that early voting locations are determined so that all voters of the county are equally served with no consideration other than convenience and accessibility to the population of the county as a whole.
- c) Determine and publicize early voting locations in the same time and manner as polling locations.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 1411 (Sharp-Collins) of 2025 requires counties that do not conduct their elections using the VCA to design a voter education and outreach plan. The bill is being heard at today's hearing.

SB 450 (Allen), Chapter 832, Statutes of 2016, enacted the VCA and required that every registered voter is mailed a VBM ballot and may visit any voting location, known as vote centers, within the voter's county prior to and on Election Day to vote or seek assistance with voting.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	60 - 19
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 3
Assembly Elections Committee:	5 - 2

POSITIONS

Sponsor: California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.

Support: California Common Cause
California Voter Foundation
Disability Rights California
League of Women Voters of California

Oppose: Election Integrity Project California, Inc.

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1411	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Sharp-Collins		
Version:	3/18/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Scott Matsumoto		

Subject: Voter education and outreach plans.

DIGEST

This bill requires counties that do not conduct their elections using the Voter's Choice Act (VCA) to design a voter education and outreach plan.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to adopt regulations requiring all counties to design and implement programs intended to identify qualified electors who are not registered voters and to register those persons to vote. The SOS is also required to adopt regulations prescribing minimum requirements for those programs.
- 2) Provides that if the SOS finds a county has not designed and implemented a program meeting the prescribed minimum requirements, the SOS shall design a program for the county and report the violation to the California Attorney General.
- 3) Authorizes any county, pursuant to the VCA, to conduct elections in which every registered voter is mailed a vote by mail (VBM) ballot and in which vote centers and ballot drop-off locations are available prior to and on Election Day, in lieu of operating polling places for the election. Counties must meet a number of planning and outreach requirements for counties adopting and conducting elections pursuant to the VCA.
- 4) Requires a county that conducts its elections using the VCA to develop an election administration plan and requires the draft plan to include a voter education and outreach plan. The SOS is required to approve, approve with modifications, or reject the education and outreach plan.

This bill:

- 1) Repeals the requirement from 1) and 2) of existing law.
- 2) Requires a county that does not conduct its elections in accordance with the VCA, to design and implement a voter education and outreach plan to identify and register

qualified electors who are not registered to vote and to encourage participation in the electoral process.

- 3) Requires each voter education and outreach plan, at a minimum, to provide information to the public about online voter registration, preregistration opportunities, VBM procedures, ballot tracking services, options for military and overseas voters, and key election dates and deadlines.
- 4) Requires the SOS to provide county election officials with a template for their voter education and outreach plans and to make the most current version of each voter education and outreach plan available on the SOS's website.
- 5) Requires county election officials to submit any amendment to their voter education and outreach plans to the SOS by October 1 of each odd-numbered year.

BACKGROUND

Voter's Choice Act. In 2016, the Legislature passed and Governor Brown signed SB 450 (Allen), Chapter 832, Statutes of 2016, which enacted the VCA and provided a new model for counties to administer elections. This election model was based on of a Colorado election model where every registered voter is mailed a VBM ballot and may visit any voting location, known as vote centers, within the voter's county prior to and on Election Day to vote or seek assistance with voting.

As part of the VCA, county election officials are also required to create and submit to the SOS a voter education and outreach plan for approval. The SOS is required to approve, approve with modifications, or reject the voter outreach and education plan within 14 days after the plan is submitted by the county elections official. The draft plan, the amended draft plan, and the adopted final plan for the administration of elections must be posted on the website of the county elections official in each language in which the county is required to provide voting materials and assistance under state and federal law and on the SOS's website in a format that is accessible for people with disabilities.

Counties using the VCA are also required to create three committees under the county elections official: a language accessibility advisory committee (LAAC), a voting accessibility advisory committee (VAAC), and a voter education and outreach advisory committee (VEOAC). A local LAAC is comprised of representatives of language minority communities. A local VAAC is comprised of voters with disabilities. This is similar to the statewide LAAC and VAAC. The local VEOAC is comprised of voter engagement, education, and community outreach advocates.

Following the enactment of SB 450, five counties elected to change their election model to the VCA for the 2018 elections. In 2020, 10 counties made the switch and in 2022, 12 more counties opted to conduct their elections using the VCA model. For the November 2024 statewide presidential general election, 29 counties conducted their elections using the VCA model. For upcoming elections, Imperial County has indicated it will use the VCA model.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. The lack of uniformity in California's voting process disproportionately harms voters with accessibility concerns. This bill advances equity in voting by requiring either an all-mail ballot election pursuant to the VCA or a voter education and outreach plan, thereby addressing the unique barriers faced by different communities' barriers to voting.
- 2) Voter Registration and Outreach Plans. AB 822 (Keysor), Chapter 704, Statutes of 1975, first permitted completed voter registration affidavits to be submitted by mail. Among other provisions, AB 822 also required the SOS to adopt regulations requiring counties to design and implement programs to identify qualified electors who are not registered to vote and to register them to vote. In 1976, the SOS adopted emergency regulations that require counties to submit voter outreach plans for review by the SOS.

According to the SOS, 54 of the 58 counties initially submitted plans. By the 1980s, many counties stopped submitting updated plans, interpreting the requirement as a one-time obligation. It is unknown whether the SOS has reported any violations to the Attorney General.

- 3) Purpose of the Bill. This bill repeals current requirements for all counties to submit an education and outreach plan to the SOS. As previously mentioned, the SOS has not received an updated plan since the 1980s. It is also unclear whether the SOS does anything to ensure that these education and outreach plans are updated by counties. The committee should consider whether the existing law should be updated rather than replaced. Specifically, the bill could contain a provision requiring counties to update their education and outreach plan on a periodic basis, resubmit the plan to the SOS, and have the provision apply only to counties that do not conduct their elections pursuant to the VCA. This would keep the current structure of existing law, provide a needed update to the law, and maintain the SOS's ability to design a plan for a county and to report the violation to the Attorney General if a county does not comply with the law.
- 4) Effect on the VCA. One of the pillars and requirements of the VCA was that counties needed to submit an election administration plan. One of the requirements of an election administration plan is to include an education and outreach plan, which is subject to SOS approval. By requiring non-VCA counties to submit an education and outreach plan, the bill would bring these counties one step closer to implementing VCA. This could potentially make it easier for counties to transition from a polling place county or an all-mail county to a VCA county. That being said, alternatively, VCA counties may view this bill as a way to maintain services and opt out of the VCA and move from vote centers back to polling places. The committee should consider the ongoing effect this bill could potentially have on VCA counties and non-VCA counties.
- 5) All Smoke, but No Fire? While the SOS is required to create a template for a county's voter education and outreach plan, nothing in this bill stipulates how detailed these plans need to be. This bill also does not require the SOS to provide feedback, approve the plan, nor does it require the counties to use the template.

Counties simply need to submit something to the SOS. For example, a county could submit a plan saying they will provide a public information for various services and communities in the county voter information guide. This could potentially be sufficient enough to satisfy the requirements of the bill. The committee should consider whether the requirements in the bill is a worthwhile exercise for counties.

- 6) Suggested Amendment – Criteria for the Voter Education and Outreach Plans. This bill requires each voter education and outreach plan, at a minimum, to provide information to the public about online voter registration, preregistration opportunities, VBM procedures, ballot tracking services, options for military and overseas voters, and key election dates and deadlines. The minimum requirements do not include plans or efforts for options for language accessibility, for voters with disabilities, or for in-person voting. Counties conducting elections under the VCA have a LAAC, VAAC, and VEOAC committee that provides input on these three important groups of voters. Non-VCA counties should also consider, at a minimum, these groups of voters as well. Committee staff recommends amending the bill to include for options for language accessibility, for voters with disabilities, and for in-person voting to the minimum requirements for each plan.
- 7) Suggested Amendment – Plans Posted on County Websites. This bill requires the SOS to put a county's education and outreach plan on their website. While the SOS website is a good way for the public to find a county's effort in terms of education and outreach, voters of that particular county may default to looking for election information about their home county on that county's website. The committee should consider amending the bill to post the county's most updated plan on that county election official's website in addition to the SOS's website.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 855 (Low) of 2017 would have required the SOS to adopt regulations to prescribe minimum requirements for county programs intended to identify qualified electors who are not registered voters, and to register those people to vote, and required counties to periodically update voter registration programs. The bill was approved by the Assembly and this committee, but was never brought up for a vote on the Senate Floor.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	62 - 2
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	5 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.

Support: California-Hawaii State Conference of the NAACP

Oppose: Election Integrity Project California, Inc.

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1511	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Committee on Elections		
Version:	5/1/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	No
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Political Reform Act of 1974: refunding and transferring contributions: voter information guide

DIGEST

This bill clarifies that a candidate who raised money to run for one office, but who does not run in the primary election for that office, may use the contributions raised to run for a different office. This bill also makes minor corrections to update statutory language.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Includes the Political Reform Act (PRA), which establishes California's campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures, and which created the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.
- 2) Specifies that a candidate who receives campaign contributions for an election but does not file to run in the primary election can transfer campaign funds raised to a campaign committee for the same or different office.
- 3) Permits a candidate who has filed for a primary election to withdraw from the race up until the candidate filing deadline for that office. This provision does not apply to anyone running for statewide office.
- 4) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to mail a state voter information guide to all households in which voters are registered prior to each statewide election, except as specified. The guide must contain information including, among other items, a complete copy of each state measure, arguments and rebuttals for and against each state measure, an analysis of each state measure, and candidate statements.
- 5) Requires a county elections official to mail a county voter information guide to each voter in the jurisdiction prior to each election, except as specified. The county voter information guide must contain, among other things, a sample ballot, a notice of in-person voting locations, arguments and rebuttals for and against each local ballot measure, an analysis of each local ballot measure, and candidate statements.

This bill:

- 1) Clarifies that a candidate who withdrew from a primary ballot may still transfer funds raised to a campaign committee for the same or different office.
- 2) Updates the term “ballot pamphlet” where it appears in the PRA to “state voter information guide” or to “county voter information guide,” as appropriate.
- 3) Deletes and corrects minor obsolete language in the PRA.

COMMENTS

- 1) Committee Bill. This is one of the Assembly Elections Committee's annual omnibus bills, containing various minor, technical, and conforming changes to provisions of the PRA. All provisions contained in this bill address issues identified by Assembly Elections Committee staff.
- 2) Transfers of Campaign Contributions. SB 948 (Limón and Zbur), Chapter 125, Statutes of 2024, sought to codify advice the FPPC provided in 2010 (*Brown Advice Letter*, No. A-09-276). Under that advice, a candidate who raises money for the primary and general elections for one office, but who decides before the primary election not to run for that office, may transfer those campaign contributions to fund a run for a different office. SB 948 made it clear that such transfers are allowed even if the candidate did not “file a declaration of candidacy to qualify” for the primary election.

After SB 948 was signed into law, the Legislature approved AB 1784 (Pellerin), Chapter 355, Statutes of 2024. AB 1784 allows candidates for elective state office, other than statewide office, to withdraw nomination documents, including declarations of candidacy, after filing them for the primary election. This makes it possible for a candidate for elective state office to file a declaration of candidacy but subsequently withdraw that declaration and, as a result, not be a legally qualified candidate for that office at the primary election.

Late last year, FPPC staff proposed the adoption of a regulation that would have prohibited a candidate from transferring campaign contributions that a candidate raised for a general election if the candidate filed a declaration of candidacy for the primary election but subsequently withdrew that declaration, and so did not appear on the ballot at the primary election. In suggesting this change, FPPC staff pointed to language in SB 948 that allowed transfers of campaign contributions if a candidate *did not file* a declaration of candidacy. FPPC staff argued that the implication of that language was that a candidate should not be allowed to transfer contributions if the candidate *did* file a declaration of candidacy, but subsequently withdrew that declaration.

In response to that proposal, the authors of SB 948 sent a letter urging the FPPC not to adopt the proposed regulatory language and noting that it was inconsistent with their legislative intent of codifying the FPPC's 2010 advice. The letter also pointed out that because AB 1784 became law after SB 948 had been signed into law, “the Legislature did not specifically consider how the candidate transfer rules imposed by

SB 948 should apply to candidates withdrawing from a primary election.” At its meeting in January 2025, the FPPC deferred consideration on the regulatory proposal until after this legislative year to see whether the Legislature adopted any statutory changes to clarify the intent of SB 948.

This bill clarifies that a candidate who has raised money for a candidacy for one office, but who does not run in the primary election for that office, may transfer the campaign contributions raised for the primary and general election to a committee established by the candidate to run for a different office. This bill additionally specifies the intent of the Legislature in enacting this provision is to ensure that SB 948 is consistent with the FPPC’s *Brown* advice letter.

- 3) Voter Information Guides. Existing state law provides for election officials to prepare voter information guides and to distribute them to voters prior to elections. For statewide elections, the SOS prepares and distributes a state voter information guide. County election officials prepare and distribute county voter information guides, which are tailored to each voter based on the contests that will appear on the voter’s ballot.

State law has used a variety of terms to refer to these official election publications, but prior legislative efforts have standardized the terminology used in the Elections Code. The PRA, however, still uses the outdated terms “ballot pamphlet” and “sample ballot” in a number of locations. The inconsistency can lead to confusion. This bill standardizes the terminology used in the PRA to conform to changes previously made in the Elections Code.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	77 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1512 **Hearing Date:** 7/15/25
Author: Committee on Elections
Version: 5/1/25
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell, Rida Shaikh

Subject: Elections: ballot language

DIGEST

This bill conforms how ballots present voting options on local measures to the requirements of the California Elections Code.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires ballot measures submitted to the voters be abbreviated on the ballot in a ballot label, followed by the words “Yes” and “No” printed on separate lines, with voting targets to the right of or below the statement of the measure to be voted on, except as specified.
- 2) Requires specified types of local ballot measures to be presented on the ballot in a manner that differs from the generally applicable rules found in the Elections Code.

This bill:

- 1) Requires local ballot measures to appear as 1) in existing law and repeals conflicting voting options and ballot formatting requirements that apply to local ballot measures.
- 2) Makes technical and corresponding changes.

BACKGROUND

Ballot Design Advisory Committee (BDAC). AB 623 (Berman), Chapter 863, Statutes of 2019, made several changes to ballot design, including formatting and allowing election officials the ability to alter the ballot to make it accessible and easy to read. It also required the Secretary of State (SOS) to create the BDAC to provide expertise on ballot design and format issues, assist the SOS in promulgating regulations that prescribe ballot design and format, and answer questions from the SOS regarding ballot design and format issues.

AB 1219 (Berman), Chapter 676, Statutes of 2023, implemented ballot layout changes advised by the BDAC. It also standardized provisions in the Elections Code relating to voting target locations and eliminated outdated ballot instructions.

COMMENTS

- 1) Committee Bill. This is one of the Assembly Elections Committee's annual omnibus bills, containing various minor, technical, and conforming changes to provisions of state law related to elections. All provisions contained in this bill address issues identified by the Chair or staff to the Assembly Elections Committee.
- 2) Ballot Differences. Several code sections, outside of the Elections Code, include provisions regulating how ballot questions or voting options appear on certain local ballot measures. This creates inconsistencies with how ballot measures are typically presented on the ballot in California.
- 3) The Government Code, for certain type of local bond measures, requires the voting question to be presented as “Bonds – Yes” and “Bonds – No” as opposed to simply a “Yes” and “No.” This can lead to confusion and errors on the ballot. In the 2024 General Election, one county misprinted the voting option for a state bond measure as “Bonds – Yes” and “Bonds – No”, contrary to what the Elections Code mandates.
- 4) Argument in Support. The California Association on Clerks and Election Officials writes:

Existing law specifies requirements that election officials must adhere to when formatting the language that is printed on ballots for various ballot measures relating to local governments, including cities, counties, school districts, and other special districts. The ballot printing specifications chapter of the Elections Code received a major update with AB 1219 (Berman), effective January 1, 2024, based on the recommendations of a ballot design advisory committee convened by the SOS in 2021. The committee included representatives from 18 county election offices.

AB 1512 would make revisions to the ballot language requirements in seven other California codes to bring them into alignment with the Elections Code.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 1219 (Berman), Chapter 676, Statutes of 2023, made various changes and revisions to ballot design requirements and standardized provisions of the Elections Code relating to voting target locations.

AB 623 (Berman), Chapter 863, Statutes of 2019, made numerous changes to the way ballots are formatted and required the SOS to create the BDAC.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	69 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: California Association of Clerks and Election Officials

Oppose: None received

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1513	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Committee on Elections		
Version:	7/3/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Recall elections: superior courts

DIGEST

This bill replaces the term “trial court” with “superior court” in provisions of the Election Code that govern the recall process and also replaces the use of registered mail with electronic or certified mail for elections-related communications.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires signatures to recall judges of courts of appeal and trial courts to equal 20% of the last vote for the office and makes provisions for when a trial court judge has not previously appeared on the ballot.
- 2) Establishes procedures for the recall of elective officers of the State of California and of all counties, cities, school districts, county boards of education, community college districts, special districts, and judges of courts of appeal and trial courts.
- 3) Allows service of process on a candidate to occur via the Secretary of State (SOS) or county election officials in specified circumstances. In such instances, the SOS or county election officials must forward notice of service of process to candidates via registered mail.
- 4) Requires the SOS, when it is disqualifying a political party from participating in a primary election, to serve notice of this to the party chair via registered mail.
- 5) Requires that when an elector challenges an election, the elector files an affidavit with the superior court of jurisdiction. That affidavit is then served either personally or via registered mail on the defendant.
- 6) Requires that the SOS, after conducting a randomized alphabet drawing to determine the order of candidates on a ballot as prescribed, to inform the local elections official of the results by registered mail.
- 7) Requires that the SOS, when receiving a request for a recount in specified counties, to send a copy of the request by registered mail to each elections official in those counties.

- 8) Requires local election officials to notify the SOS of election dates and the closing of filing for offices and nominations via registered mail.

This bill:

- 1) Replaces the term “trial court” with “superior court” in provisions of the Elections Code related to the recall process and makes related conforming and clarifying changes.
- 2) Establishes that communication between county election officials and the SOS occur via electronic delivery and that communications from governmental offices to nongovernmental entities occur via certified mail.

COMMENTS

- 1) Committee Bill. This is one of the Assembly Elections Committee's annual omnibus bills, containing minor, technical, and conforming changes to the Elections Code.
- 2) Recalls of Judges. The California Constitution once provided for three different types of trial courts in the state: superior, municipal, and justice courts. Proposition 191 in November 1994, Proposition 220 in June 1998, and Proposition 48 in November 2002 consolidated the trial courts, such that superior courts became the state's only trial courts.

Most provisions of the Elections Code that relate to the election of superior court judges use the term “superior court” when referring to those offices. The provisions of the Elections Code governing the recall of superior court judges, however, use the term “trial court” instead. The term “trial court” predates trial court consolidation and is not defined in the Elections Code. Use of that term exclusively in provisions of law related to the recall process can lead to confusion. Accordingly, this bill replaces the term “trial court” with “superior court” in provisions of the Elections Code related to the recall process and makes related conforming and clarifying changes.

- 3) Speeding Communications. This bill contains provisions to ensure that elections-related communications are delivered electronically or via certified mail option, rather than by registered mail, which is a slower option. This bill eliminates all existing situations in which the Elections Code requires something to be sent by registered mail, and instead requires that it be sent either electronically in the case of communications between different governmental bodies, or via certified mail, in the case of communication from a governmental body to an individual or non-governmental organization. AB 502 (Pellerin) included these changes, until it was amended on June 16, 2025 to relate to a different matter.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	69 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

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