

Informational Hearing

Voter Identification in California

Tuesday, August 26, 2025
10:00 a.m. – 1021 O Street, Room 2100

Background Document

The California Constitution declares that “a United States citizen 18 years of age and resident in this state may vote.” The state constitution further prohibits a person serving a prison term or who is deemed mentally incompetent from voting.

In order to vote in California, a person must first register to vote by filling out a form either online or on paper that requires the following information:

- Attestation of U.S. citizenship, residency in the State of California, and being at least 18 years of age
- First and last name
- Date of birth
- A California driver's license or identification card number, the last four digits of their Social Security number, or an indication that the person does not have these
- The U.S. state or foreign country of birth
- Home address, including county of residence
- Political party preference, including no party preference

A person then must consent to their Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) record being accessed and further must declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that:

- I am a U.S. citizen and a resident of California and at least 18 years old.
- I am not currently serving a state or federal prison term for the conviction of a felony.
- I am not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court.
- I understand that it is a crime to intentionally provide incorrect information on this form.
- The information on this form is true and correct.

The process of filling out and submitting this form is referred to as filing an affidavit of voter registration. When a person does this on a paper form, they must sign the form and return it to the person's county registrar of voters. That registrar's office enters the information, including an image of the voter's signature from the paper form, into its election management system, which creates a voter file.

VoteCal

VoteCal is California's centralized voter registration database. New voter registrations applied for online automatically get entered into VoteCal. Those filed on paper and returned to the person's country registrar of voters are entered into the county election management system, which shares the voter file with VoteCal.

The VoteCal system interacts with the DMV database to attempt to confirm the identity of the person registering. If the DMV files include a match in terms of driver's license or state identification card number, address, and other identifying information, then the identity of that voter is confirmed. The person's signature is imported from the DMV file to the voter file, and the person is registered to vote and may vote at the next election.

If the DMV files do not provide an identity match, then the DMV's database interacts with the federal Social Security Administration to confirm the person's identity using the last four digits of their Social Security number. Again, if this confirms the person's identity, then the person is successfully registered to vote.

If a person's identity cannot be confirmed either by DMV through its own files or via the Social Security Administration, then prior to voting the person registering must provide documentation, specified in regulation, to confirm their identity. (Typically, a county elections worker requests that the voter confirm their identity when the person attempts to vote in person or upon receipt of a vote by mail (VBM) ballot.) In addition, the online voter registration site directs the person to print out an affidavit of voter registration, fill it out and sign it, and mail it in to the county elections office in the county in which they reside, so that the person's voter file can include the person's signature.

When Voting in Person

When voting in person, voters state or provide their name and address to the poll worker. The poll worker finds and confirms the voter's name on the roster. Then, the voter signs their name in the appropriate space provided.

If the person is voting for the first time after registering to vote did not provide a driver's license number, California identification card number, or the last four digits of their Social Security number or VoteCal could not confirm their identity, then the person may be asked to show a form of identification when at the polling location. The Secretary of State (SOS) provides a list of acceptable identification and includes, but is not limited to, a driver's license, an identification card, passport, student identification card, a credit/debit card, health club identification card, or an identification card provided by a commercial establishment. If no identification is provided by the voter, then the ballot is considered a provisional ballot.

When Voting By Mail

The vast majority of Californians vote by mail. For the 2024 presidential general election, 80.76% of Californian voters voted by mail. For statewide elections in 2020, 2021, and 2022, about 90% of California voters voted by mail.

When a person votes by mail, the county elections official determines the person's identity by using the person's signature on the return envelope for a VBM ballot. Election officials compare the signature on the VBM ballot return envelope with the signature from the voter's registration or from a form issued by the elections official containing the voter's signature. The accepted signature becomes part of the voter's registration record.

Voter File Maintenance

On a regular basis, the SOS performs voter file maintenance. It receives monthly files from the California Department of Public Health of death notices, from the courts of conservatorships, and from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) of incarcerations. In each of these cases, voters are provided a notice that their registration will be canceled in 15 days, unless the voter contacts their county registrar of voters with information showing that the death notice, conservatorship notice, or incarceration notice are incorrect. CDCR also informs the SOS of individuals released from incarceration and then the county registrars reaches out to those individuals to let them know that they are eligible to register to vote again.

For changes of address, the SOS once each month provides a copy of the entire California voter file to the California Employment Development Department (EDD), who compares it to information it receives from the United States Postal Service called the National Change of Address (NCOA) list. EDD sends SOS a file showing any matches between the voter file and the NCOA list. SOS shares these with the relevant county election officials. County election officials follow up with the voters who have changed addresses directly to either update their voter registration to a new address in California or to begin the process of cancelling their voter registration if they have moved out of state.

Purpose of This Hearing

This hearing will examine and seek to provide a clear understanding of how California currently confirms the identity of a voter during the voter registration process and when voting in an election. The hearing will also seek to find methods and procedures to improve the current system in order to improve confidence in California's elections and the experience of the voter.

Bios of panelists

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

Shirley Nash Weber, Ph.D. was nominated to serve as California Secretary of State by Governor Gavin Newsom on December 22, 2020 and sworn into office on January 29, 2021. Voters elected her for a full term on November 8, 2022. Weber is California's first Black Secretary of State and only the fifth African American to serve as a state constitutional officer in California's 175-year history. Before her appointment, Secretary Weber served four terms as an Assemblymember representing California's 79th Assembly District. During her tenure in the Assembly, Weber chaired the Assembly Elections and Redistricting Committee as well as the Assembly Budget Committee. She also served as a member of the Standing Committees on Education, Higher Education, Elections, Budget, Banking and Finance.

Tricia Webber, Santa Cruz County Clerk/Registrar of Voters, Santa Cruz County:

Tricia Webber is the Santa Cruz County Clerk/Registrar of Voters. In this position she manages all elections conducted in the county and serves as the Commissioner of Civil Marriage. Her office is responsible for voter registration, conducting elections, managing candidate and campaign filings, and serving as a passport acceptance facility.

Tricia joined Santa Cruz County Clerk/Elections in 1998 and became a California Registered Election Official in 2010 after completing courses offered through the Election Center and the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO). She appointed as County Clerk/Registrar of Voters in December 2020. She was elected County Clerk for a 4 year term in 2022.

In addition to her commitments to Santa Cruz County, Tricia serves as Vice President of CACEO is the co-chair of CACEO's Education/Training Committee.

Katy Owens Hubler, Director, Elections & Redistricting, National Conference of State Legislatures:

Katy Owens Hubler is director of NCSL's Elections and Redistricting Program, overseeing a team researching election administration policies. She has been in the field of election administration since 2010, first working for the Denver Elections Division. She developed expertise in state-level election policies during a previous stint at NCSL and has also spent time coordinating international election observation teams for The Carter Center and as a consultant focused on the intersection of election administration and technology. She has been back at NCSL since January 2024 and is happy to be supporting the nation's legislatures.

David Becker, Executive Director and Founder, The Center for Election Innovation & Research:

David Becker is the Executive Director and Founder of the nonpartisan, non-profit Center for Election Innovation & Research, working with election officials of both parties, all around the country, to ensure elections voters should trust, and do trust. David previously served as director of the elections program at The Pew Charitable Trusts, and prior to that, served for seven years as a senior trial attorney in the Voting Section of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, overseeing voting rights enforcement in several states, including California. David serves as CBS' election law expert, and is frequently published on election issues. David is the co-author, with CBS News' Chief Washington Correspondent Major Garrett, of the book **THE BIG TRUTH: Upholding Democracy in the Age of The Big Lie**. David received both his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of California, Berkeley.

Devin Lavelle, Assistant Director, California Research Bureau, California State Library:

Devin is the Assistant Director of the California Research Bureau. He has led and participated in dozens of quantitative and qualitative research projects in both the public and private sectors. He holds a Master's in Public Policy and Administration from Sacramento State.

Jessica Washington, Deputy District Attorney, Sonoma County District Attorney's Office:

Jessica Washington is a Deputy District Attorney with the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office where she has prosecuted a wide range of cases over the last 11 years. She is currently assigned to the Environmental and Consumer Law Division, where her primary focus is on consumer protection prosecutions. Another aspect of her current assignment is the investigation and prosecution of voter fraud cases in Sonoma County. Prior to her current assignment, she prosecuted misdemeanors and felonies, with special focus on DUIs, domestic violence, vehicular homicides, post-conviction and appellate issues. She previously worked in the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office. She has a B.A. in Sociology from UCLA and a J.D. from Chapman University School of Law.

Colleen Britton, Solano County Coordinator/Volunteer, Election Integrity Project California, Inc.:

Colleen has been an active volunteer with the Election Integrity Project California (EIPCa) since 2012. She served on the Board of Directors from 2022-2023 and currently serves as the Solano County EIPCa Coordinator. Colleen has testified before the California State Senate and Assembly Election Committee hearings on many occasions advocating for EIPCa's position on proposed election related legislation.

EIPCa is a non-profit, volunteer organization. Their purpose “is to defend, through education, research, and advocacy (including legal action and providing and funding the training of election observers), the civil right of U.S. citizens to fully participate in the election process under Federal and state law.”

Conrad Crump, Senior Health Policy Advocate, Disability Rights California:

Conrad Crump is a Senior Health Policy Advocate at Disability Rights California, where he advances legislative and policy initiatives to expand equity and access for people with disabilities. With a background in the California State Legislature, he has contributed to election reform, budget negotiations, and cross-sector policy development. Conrad is deeply committed to community engagement, working alongside local leaders and organizations to promote inclusion, amplify underrepresented voices, and drive meaningful change.

Rosalind Gold, Chief Public Policy Officer, NALEO Educational Fund:

Rosalind Gold serves as Chief Public Policy Officer with NALEO Educational Fund, where she has worked for more than three decades on policy analysis and research for the organization’s naturalization and Latino civic engagement efforts. Rosalind has extensive policy expertise in the areas of newcomer civic integration, election reform, voting rights, redistricting, and the decennial Census.

Rosalind has served on the advisory committees and boards of several public affairs and research efforts; she is the former Chair of the Board of Advisors of the Future of California Elections and she currently sits on the Board of Advisors of the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission. Rosalind has delivered testimony before many public and private committee and commission hearings.

Rosalind received her J.D. from Harvard Law School and bachelor’s from Pomona College in Claremont, California.