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Umberg, Thomas J.

California State Senate

ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS



SCOTT WIENER
CHAIR
AGENDA

Tuesday, June 16, 2026
9:30 a.m. -- 1021 O Street, Room 2100

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MEASURES HEARD IN FILE ORDER

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| 1. | AB 1116 | Berman | Elections: voter registration. |
| 2. | AB 1539 | Addis | Presidential elections: qualifications for office. |
| 3. | AB 1562 | Jackson | Elections: precinct board members. |
| 4. | AB 1664 | Jackson | Elections: law enforcement investigations of election records or voting technology.(Urgency) |
| 5. | AB 1789* | Boerner | Political Reform Act of 1974: candidate trainings. |
| 6. | AB 1853 | Pellerin | Voter information guide: candidate statements.(Urgency) |
| 7. | AB 1919 | Pellerin | Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District: transactions and use tax: qualified voter initiative.(Urgency) |
| 8. | AB 2484 | Alvarez | San Diego Metropolitan Transit System: transactions and use tax: voter initiatives. |
| 9. | AB 2592* | Pacheco | Lobbyist training. |
| 10. | AB 2655* | Valencia | Campaign funds: security expenses: security personnel. |
| 11. | AB 2785* | Elections | Elections: redistricting information. |

*Proposed for Consent

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

Bill No: AB 1116 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26
Author: Berman
Version: 6/23/25
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell

Subject: Elections: voter registration.

DIGEST

This bill requires by September 1, 2027, the Secretary of State (SOS) to develop a method to collect an electronic image of a signature from someone who does not have a California driver's license or a California identification card and is registering to vote electronically using the statewide voter registration system on the SOS's website.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Entitles a person to register to vote if that person is a United States citizen, a resident of California, not in prison for the conviction of a felony, not found mentally incompetent to vote by a court, and at least 18 years of age at the time of the next election.
- 2) Permits a person who is qualified to vote and who has a valid California driver's license or state identification card to submit an affidavit of voter registration electronically on the SOS's website. On the affidavit, the person registering to vote must affirmatively attest to the truth of the information provided and also assent to the use of the applicant's signature from their driver's license or identification card for verification of voter identity.
- 3) Requires the SOS to obtain an electronic copy of the signature from the person's driver's license or state identification card directly from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).
- 4) Requires the SOS's electronic voter registration system to immediately verify that the driver's license or state identification card number provided and the date of birth provided matches the information on file for the person at the DMV.
- 5) Requires the SOS and the DMV to maintain a process and infrastructure to transfer the electronic copy of the signature and other information for the person registering to the SOS and county election management systems so that the person may register to vote and vote.

- 6) Provides that in order to register on the SOS's website without a California driver's license or a state identification card, a person must complete the affidavit of voter registration electronically on the SOS's website, print a hard copy of the completed affidavit, and mail or deliver the hard copy of the completed affidavit to the SOS or a county elections official. A person who registers to vote this way must, when first voting, provide documentation of identity.
- 7) Uses a person's signature on the return envelope for a vote by mail (VBM) ballot to verify the identity of the voter.
- 8) Requires each state, pursuant to the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), to implement a single, uniform, official, centralized, interactive computerized statewide voter registration list defined, maintained, and administered at the state level that contains the name and registration information of every legally registered voter in the state and assigns a unique identifier to each legally registered voter in the state. California's statewide voter database is known as VoteCal.

This bill:

- 1) Requires the SOS to develop a method to collect an electronic image of a signature for those without a driver's license or state identification card who are registering using the statewide online system.
- 2) Directs the SOS to amend its online registration affidavit to provide that a person providing their electronic signature assents to its use and that the SOS accept the signature for voter registration purposes.
- 3) Requires the SOS to develop a system for those who register without providing a driver's license or state identification card number that authenticates the identity of the applicant using the last four digits of their Social Security Number, date of birth, and full name.
- 4) Requires the SOS to develop a process for transmitting the image of the signature collected by the online registration system to the statewide voter registration database and the county election management systems.
- 5) Takes effect on September 1, 2027.

BACKGROUND

California has long mandated that a voter register to vote by filing an affidavit of registration. Among other information, the affidavit shall include the name, residence address, date of birth, driver's license number, and last four digits of the social security number of the person registering to vote. Election officials use this information to confirm the person is eligible to register and later to verify the voter's identity.

SB 381 (Ron Calderon), Chapter 613, Statutes of 2008, permitted filing an affidavit of registration online on the SOS's website by any person who is qualified to register to vote and who has a valid California driver's license or state identification card. SB 381

made the online voter registration system operative when the SOS certified that its statewide voter registration database complied with the requirements of HAVA.

For security purposes, SB 381 required the person registering to vote on the SOS's website to provide their driver's license or identification card number, date of birth, the last four digits of their social security number, and any other information the SOS deems necessary to establish the identity of the affiant. The law requires the SOS to immediately confirm with the DMV that the driver's license or state identification card number and date of birth match the information on file with the DMV and obtain an electronic copy of the applicant's signature from the driver's license or state identification card. That signature becomes part of the voter's file with the elections official in the county where the voter resides and gets compared to the signature on the VBM ballot envelope when the voter votes by mail, as over 80 percent of California voters do.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. The National Voter Registration Act and California's New Motor Voter program have been instrumental in closing voter registration gaps by making it easier for eligible voters to register or update their registration when completing a driver's license and state identification card transaction. Similarly, our online voter registration system has simplified voter registration for Californians with a DMV-issued driver's license or identification card. Nevertheless, there remains a voter registration gap of over four million Californians. This bill would take the next step to assist eligible but unregistered Californians by removing an unnecessary barrier to using our online voter registration system. This change will make our voter registration process more cost-effective and efficient, while maintaining the integrity of our voter lists.
- 2) Arguments in Support. Noting that many Californians, particularly those with disabilities, do not possess driver's licenses or state identification cards, supporters fault the current online registration system for creating barriers to participation. For hundreds of thousands of people, the current system requires printing out, signing, and mailing or delivering in person to the county elections office the affidavit of registration. Once received, these paper forms create extra work for registrars of voters as they must decipher handwriting, scan signatures, and re-type handwritten forms into the registration database.

The bill's sponsor, the Center for Secure and Modern Elections, says of the changes the bill makes to online registration:

This change improves convenience for voters and saves time and money for election officials. It also improves the accuracy of voter records by reducing the possibility of inadvertent errors when handwritten forms are manually entered into the voter registration database. Expanding [online voter registration] also improves security, reducing the risk of a paper submission being lost or damaged in transit.

- 3) Secretary of State Concerns. Calling the bill fundamentally flawed, Secretary of State Shirley Weber writes this bill "presents severe technical, security, and

operational challenges that make implementation not only impractical but potentially dangerous to the integrity of California's election systems." She enumerates her concerns as follows:

Security risks. The SOS states, "Our current VoteCal system software deliberately restricts external connections to trusted government partners like the California [DMV] precisely to maintain the highest level of security." Using any outside vendor to achieve the mandates of this bill could compromise critical protections of the SOS's online systems.

Technical and operational complexity. The SOS notes the VoteCal system was not designed to accept or validate signature files from the public and so substantial modifications to the system would be necessary to not only the SOS's systems but also to the 58 county election management systems.

Identity verification gaps. The bill directs SOS to verify an applicant registration using information from the federal Social Security Administration (SSA), but the SOS points out this is not currently possible as the SOS does not contract with the SSA but relies on DMV for identity verification. This adds a complication to implementing the bill and also an expense.

Prohibitive implementation timeline and costs. California has nearly 23 million registered voters. The SOS notes that initial implementation of online voter registration in 2012 cost \$1.8 million and this modification would be of a similar scale. The SOS emphasizes the differences between California's voter registration system and that of other states cannot be overstated, thus rendering other state's costs for similar activities incomparable.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

SB 299 (Limon) of 2024 would have required the SOS and the DMV to develop a process to determine whether a person who submits a driver's license application is already registered or preregistered to vote. Based upon this determination, DMV would have been required to transmit specified information to the SOS so the SOS could register, preregister, or update that person's existing voter registration. Governor Newsom vetoed this bill. In his veto message, he noted that it would have required DMV and SOS to develop new information technology systems for processing voter registrations and that these systems would cost tens of millions of dollars.

SB 381 (Ron Calderon), Chapter 613, Statutes of 2008, allows a person who is qualified to register to vote and who has a valid California driver's license or state identification card to submit an affidavit of voter registration electronically through the California's Online Voter Registration system on the SOS's internet website.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	60 - 18
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 3
Assembly Elections Committee:	5 - 2

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Center for Secure and Modern Elections

Support: Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers
Disability Rights California
Health in Partnership
Institute for Responsive Government Action
League of Women Voters of California
NextGen California
Responsive Gov Action

Oppose: County of Kern

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1539 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26
Author: Addis
Version: 5/19/26
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell

Subject: Presidential elections: qualifications for office

DIGEST

This bill requires, before the California Secretary of State (SOS) may place candidates for President and Vice President on the general election ballot, a representative of each political party to certify, under penalty of perjury, that the party's nominees for those offices are qualified under Amendment XXII to the U.S. Constitution.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) States, pursuant to Amendment XXII to the U.S. Constitution, that “[n]o person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of the President more than once.”
- 2) States, pursuant to Amendment XII to the U.S. Constitution, “no person constitutionally ineligible to the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice President of the United States.”
- 3) States, pursuant to Amendment XII, that when electors of a state meet and vote “for President and Vice President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves....”
- 4) States, pursuant to the U.S. Constitution, that “[t]he executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall... be elected, as follows: Each State shall appoint, in such manner as the legislature thereof may direct, a number of electors, equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives to which the state may be entitled in the Congress....”
- 5) Permits, pursuant to the California Constitution, the Legislature to provide for partisan elections for presidential candidates, including a “presidential primary whereby the candidates on the ballot are those found by the Secretary of State to be recognized candidates throughout the nation or throughout California for the office of President of the United States, and those whose names are placed on the ballot by

petition, but excluding any candidate who has withdrawn by filing an affidavit of noncandidacy.”

- 6) Provides specific procedures by which the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the American Independent Party, the Peace and Freedom Party, and the Green Party to participate in a presidential primary election.
- 7) Requires by 5 p.m. on the 75th day before an election at which electors for President and Vice President will be chosen, that each of these parties notify the SOS of the party’s nominee for President and Vice President. If a party has not yet held its national convention, then the party may notify the SOS of its apparent nominee.
- 8) Requires the SOS to place on the general election ballot the names of the candidates for President and Vice President that the political parties have selected.
- 9) Provides a process to nominate candidates for partisan offices by means other than a partisan primary, including the nomination of a group of presidential electors.
- 10) Provides a process for presidential electors to be selected as write-in candidates.

This bill:

- 1) Requires by 5 p.m. on the 75th day before an election at which electors for President and Vice President will be chosen, a representative of each political party certify to the SOS in writing and under penalty of perjury the following:
 - a) The party’s nominee for President is qualified under Amendment XXII to the U.S. Constitution.
 - b) The party’s nominee for Vice President is qualified under Amendment XXII to the U.S. Constitution and therefore eligible under Amendment XII.
- 2) If a party does not make these certifications, then the SOS shall not place the names of the party’s nominees for President and Vice President on the ballot.
- 3) Requires a representative of a group of independent presidential electors that are pledged to vote for a specific candidate for President and Vice President to make this same certification. If this certification is made, then the SOS shall place those candidates’ names on the ballot.
- 4) Requires that a representative of a group of write-in candidates for presidential electors shall by 5 p.m. on the 14th day before the election make this same certification. If this certification is made, then the SOS shall include the group of write-in candidates for presidential electors on the SOS’s certified list of write-in candidates.

BACKGROUND

Presidential Elections in California. The process of electing the President and Vice President in California is different than electing individuals to other federal and state

offices. For the most part, the process is partisan with each political party holding a primary to provide direction for the state party's delegation at, typically, a national convention.

In California, candidates need to be recognized by the SOS to be on a political party's presidential primary ballot. Voters, at the statewide primary election, receive a ballot based on their political party preference. Some, but not all, political parties in California allow "crossover" voting, which allow voters who are not affiliated with their political party preference to vote in their primary election.

Following the statewide presidential primary and after every state has their presidential primary or caucus, the delegations from each state convene at their national conventions to select their party's nominee for President and Vice President. When these conventions conclude and by 5 p.m. on the 75th day before the election, each political party in California notifies the SOS of their nominees and submit a slate of electors for that political party's nominee.

Voters do not directly elect the President and Vice President. Instead, the U.S. Constitution requires each state to appoint electors who have the responsibility of choosing the President and Vice President. Each state is allocated a number of electors equal to the number of Senators and Representatives the state is entitled to in Congress. The electors from all the states are referred to as the "Electoral College."

When Californians mark their ballots for President and Vice President, they actually are casting their votes for a slate of presidential elector candidates selected by the political party that nominated that presidential ticket (or, in the case of an independent presidential ticket not affiliated with a political party, for a slate of elector candidates that has pledged to vote for that ticket).

Following the statewide presidential general election, the winning slate of electors meet at the California State Capitol to officially vote for President and Vice President. The results are then submitted to Congress for certification.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. The current federal administration has repeatedly tested constitutional guardrails and openly floated the idea of seeking a third term. This bill stops these abuses of power before they reach our ballot and protects Californians from bad faith attempts to game the Constitution and undermine our democracy.
- 2) Arguments in Support. Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, the bill's sponsor, writes in support saying the bill "strengthens constitutional safeguards by ensuring that candidates placed on the ballot for President and Vice President meet the eligibility requirements set forth in the United States Constitution." Noting that Amendment XXII limits any individual from being elected President more than twice, and Amendment XII bars anyone ineligible to serve as President from serving as Vice President, she states "current law does not provide clear consequences if a political party attempts to place a constitutionally ineligible candidate on the ballot." This bill addresses this gap.

- 3) Clarifying amendment. The author may wish to amend this bill to clarify that the certification for a Vice Presidential candidate is that they are eligible under Amendment XXII to be President, rather than the general language of Amendment XII, which states, in part, that “no person constitutionally ineligible to the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice President of the United States.” The U.S. Constitution prescribes other qualifications to be President, including being at least 35 years or age and a natural born citizen of the U.S.
- 4) Double referral. Should this resolution pass this committee, it will next be heard in the Committee on Public Safety.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

SB 46 (Umberg) prohibits the SOS from placing the name of a candidate for U.S. President or Vice President on a ballot, unless the candidate affirms, under oath, that the candidate meets the requirements for one of the aforementioned offices and the SOS does not have a reasonable suspicion the candidate is lying. This bill passed the Senate in January but has not been referred to a committee in the Assembly.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	75 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	14 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis

Support: CFT – A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO
San Luis Obispo County Democratic Party Central Committee
Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

Oppose: One individual

-- END --

- 7) Permits a state employee to take time off, without loss of pay, to serve as a poll worker on Election Day.
- 8) Provides no person in California shall, on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, mental disability, physical disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, or sexual orientation, be unlawfully denied full and equal access to the benefits of, or be unlawfully subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity that is conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, is funded directly by the state, or receives any financial assistance from the state.

This bill:

- 1) Permits a county to adopt a system through which individuals are randomly selected to serve as poll workers. Every registered voter residing in the jurisdiction is eligible to be selected for service, except for candidates for an office to be voted on at the election. The elections official develops and proposes a plan that must be approved by the county board of supervisors.
- 2) Permits the elections official to disqualify a person if the elections official determines the person is unsuitable to serve, but cannot be disqualified for specified protected classifications in current law. An individual, using a form developed and posted online by the elections official, may be excused from service as a poll worker for ill health, if the individual is at least 70 years old, or for another good or sufficient reason as determined by the elections official.
- 3) Requires the elections official to provide each selected individual a written notice at least 15 days prior to the reporting date designated by the elections official for each election. The selected individual must report to the elections official on the reporting date stated in the written notice and serve the duration of the election. The selected individual must receive compensation for service and is subject to the same protections that apply to an employee who takes time off to serve on a jury.

BACKGROUND

Nebraska. Nebraska permits jurisdictions to “draft” election workers in the same fashion as courts select jury members. According to Nebraska state law, a draftee poll worker is required to serve as an election workers for two years in a county with a population less than 400,000 inhabitants, or four years in a county with a population of 400,000 or more inhabitants. All draftee election workers are randomly selected from the county’s list of registered voters and are required to be of good repute and character and be able to read and write the English language, except as provided. Under Nebraska’s law, citizens are not excluded from serving as a draftee election workers unless excused by reason of ill health or other good and sufficient reason. A person who is selected and fails to serve can be found guilty of neglecting their duties.

One county that uses election worker draftees is Douglas County. According to the Douglas County Election Commission website, Douglas County serves more than 360,000 registered voters at approximately 230 precincts across the county and it takes up to 3,000 election workers to administer each election. More than fifty-percent of all

election workers are volunteers and the Election Commission drafts voters to serve in various election roles in order to ensure elections are administered properly and fairly. Drafted election workers are notified approximately 70 days prior to an election and required to work multiple elections, four elections in Douglas County, to complete their required service.

In Douglas County, if a person is at least 70 years old, they may opt out of serving as a elections worker. Other individuals who are unable to fulfill their election duty for health or other sufficient reasons are required to provide certain documentation to postpone or be excused altogether. A draftee who fails to serve at an election or attend training may be guilty of a misdemeanor, and their name may be submitted to local law enforcement for citation.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. When people do not understand how democracy works, it becomes easier to manipulate and easier to break. When only a small group of people are running our elections, public trust begins to erode. This bill strengthens our democracy and encourages civic engagement by authorizing county election officials to adopt a system in which individuals are randomly selected to serve as poll workers for elections. This bill is intended to bring people closer to the democratic process, recognizing democracy works best when more people are inside the room, not locked out of it.
- 2) Other Methods for Civic Engagement. This bill is one of many potential paths to increase civic engagement, participation, and voter confidence in California's electoral process. The committee should consider whether creating a system similar to jury service is the proper solution for the problem the author seeks to address. For example, various education and outreach methods, such as an education campaign, events, mail, and social media, may be a more suitable answer to the ongoing endeavors to bolster civic participation, engagement, and confidence in elections.
- 3) Sunset Date – Suggested Amendment. While it is not known which counties may pursue to implement this selection process for poll workers, it might be wise to have some mechanism to determine whether a county actually implemented a selection system and whether it was worthwhile endeavor. Committee staff recommends amending the bill to include a sunset provision of January 1, 2033.
- 4) Argument in Support. In a letter supporting this bill, PowerCA Action, stated, in part, the following:

Poll workers play a critical role in ensuring accessible, fair, and well functioning elections. They support voters at the polls, uphold election integrity, and help ensure a smooth Election Day experience. At a time when voter confidence has declined and participation, especially among historically underrepresented communities, has dropped, California must take proactive steps to strengthen civic engagement and trust in our democratic institutions. AB 1562 provides a meaningful opportunity to do just that. By expanding how poll workers are recruited, this bill creates more pathways for Californians, particularly young

people and communities of color, to engage directly in the electoral process. Increased exposure to how elections function can deepen civic understanding, build trust, and encourage life-long participation.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	56 - 10
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 1

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: PowerCA Action

Oppose: One individual

-- END --

This bill:

- 1) Requires a local agency, political subdivision, or elections official to provide written notice to the SOS and the AG, no later than one calendar day after becoming aware, of any warrant, subpoena, or active law enforcement investigation pertaining to the search, seizure, or retention of any election records or certified voting technology, or any portion thereof, under their custody or control.
- 2) Provides the SOS and AG may intervene, and must be entitled to calendar preference, in any court proceedings connected therewith, or initiate proceedings in any court to challenge a warrant or subpoena described in this section on any valid grounds or seek any other appropriate relief.
- 3) Defines “certified voting technology” to mean any voting technologies certified by the SOS, including voting systems, ballot on demand printing systems, electronic poll book systems, or adjudication systems, and the hardware, firmware, software, proprietary intellectual property they contain, any components, and any products they generate, including ballots, ballot images, reports, logs, cast vote records, or electronic data.
- 4) Provides a sunset date of January 1, 2030.
- 5) Contains an urgency clause to take effect in time for the November 3, 2026, statewide general election.

BACKGROUND

Riverside County. In early 2026, a local election watchdog group raised concerns that the number of ballots cast in the November 2025 statewide special election differed from the official total reported by the Riverside County Registrar of Voters (ROV) by nearly 46,000 ballots. Taking these concerns into consideration, the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department applied to the Superior Court and sought a warrant to seize the ballots “in order to prove or disprove any criminal conduct.” The court issued a judicial warrant on February 9, 2026.

At a presentation to the Riverside County Board of Supervisors on February 10, 2026, the ROV addressed the alleged discrepancies and disputed the watchdog group’s figures. The ROV noted the difference between ballots cast and ballots counted, based on official results, was 103 ballots.

On February 26, 2026, the Sheriff’s Department seized about 1,000 boxes of ballots and ballot materials.

The Sheriff’s Department also obtained two additional search warrants: one to seize additional election materials (beyond ballots) and another to appoint a special master to oversee the Sheriff Department’s counting of ballots.

As this process unfolded, the AG issued multiple letters directing the Riverside County Sheriff to preserve all seized ballots and pause further action. The AG further questioned whether the warrants were supported by probable cause and whether the

Riverside County Sheriff's Department presented the magistrate with all the material evidence required by law.

On April 8, 2026, the California Supreme Court ordered the Riverside County Sheriff to halt his investigation into alleged fraud in the November 2025 special election and preserve all seized items. Proceedings remain ongoing and the California Supreme Court indicated that this matter will be considered on an expedited basis.

Requesting State Voter Rolls. There have been various reports that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has requested election records or access to voting equipment in various states. According to the State Democracy Research Initiative with the University of Wisconsin Law School, the DOJ has filed federal lawsuits against the District of Columbia and 30 states, including California. These lawsuits seek orders to compel jurisdictions to submit copies of complete voter registration lists, including dates of birth, driver's license numbers, and the last four digits of Social Security numbers. While many of these suits are being litigated, six federal district courts have dismissed the DOJ's suits. This includes suits against Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, and Rhode Island. The DOJ also reached a settlement with Oklahoma where the state agreed to provide its sensitive voter data in exchange for the DOJ dismissing the lawsuit.

Requesting Local Voter Rolls. In 2025, the DOJ received a complaint of a non-citizen in Orange County, California, receiving a vote by mail ballot. The DOJ requested various voter registration records from Orange County relating to the number and information of cancelled voter registrations since 2020. The Orange County Registrar of Voters provided data, but redacted sensitive information, such as driver's license numbers, identification numbers, Social Security numbers, language preferences, and signatures. The DOJ went to court for the requested materials. The matter was subsequently stayed while the case between the DOJ and the California SOS was pending. The case between the DOJ and the California SOS was dismissed.

In January 2026, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) raided election offices in Fulton County, Georgia and seized more than 600 boxes of ballots and other election materials from the 2020 election pursuant to a search warrant. The warrant also sought tabulator tapes for every voting machine and ballot images that were created from ballot scanning from the 2020 General Election in Fulton County. The warrant targeted voter rolls from the 2020 General Election including lists of voters who were issued and returned absentee ballots or who participated in advanced voting or Election Day voting. In February, Fulton County officials filed an emergency motion in federal court seeking the return of the election records seized by the FBI, and in April, a federal judge ordered the U.S. DOJ to turn over key details behind its seizure of the 2020 election records. The case is pending.

Additionally, in April, the *New York Times* reported that the DOJ sent a letter to the chief elections officer in Wayne County, Michigan requesting election records from the November 2024 federal election.

Related and Prior Legislation. SB 73 (Cervantes), Chapter 10, Statutes of 2026, which took effect on May 27, 2026, restricts law enforcement agencies and officers from engaging in specified conduct related to elections. Among the provisions of the

measure, the bill required the AG to provide guidance for county election officials and managers of election sites regarding how to respond to requests for access by law enforcement agencies for election-related materials and locations. The bill also prohibited a peace officer from interfering in any manner with the administration of any election in this state, including the seizure of specified voter data and voting technology, unless certain conditions are met.

SB 851 (Cervantes), Chapter 238, Statutes of 2025, among other provisions, required state agencies and local governments to provide written notice to the AG and the SOS within three court days after the agency or jurisdiction files or is served with a court action that contains a claim relating to elections arising under federal law.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. California's elections are foundational to our democracy and cannot be left vulnerable to unchecked interference. When law enforcement agencies search, seize, or retain election records and voting systems without proper oversight, they risk disrupting the very machinery of democratic participation and eroding the public's trust in election outcomes. California has long been a leader in establishing robust, transparent election administration, and it is our responsibility as legislators to ensure that the AG and the SOS are empowered to respond swiftly when that system comes under scrutiny. By requiring local agencies and elections officials to notify state authorities within one business day of any warrant, subpoena, or active investigation touching election materials, this bill ensures that the state can intervene, protect critical records, and uphold the rule of law. Free and fair elections are not simply a procedural matter, they are the mechanism through which every Californian's voice is heard, and we have an obligation to defend that process with every tool available to us.
- 2) Suggested Amendment – Notices. This bill provides that notification of any warrant, subpoena, or active law enforcement investigation be written. If notification needs to be mailed, it may take a few days, or potentially even longer, for the written notice to arrive at an office of the AG and SOS. Committee staff recommends the bill be amended to include additional flexibility in what type of notification is required by removing the word "written." This would allow for faster notification, such as a phone call, to the AG and SOS.
- 3) Suggested Amendment – Timing. This bill provides written notice to the AG and SOS occur no later than one calendar day after becoming aware of any warrant, subpoena, or active law enforcement investigation. While it is a short timeframe to submit notice to the AG and SOS, if an entity is served with some kind of notice, an action might occur within a day. The committee recommends the bill be amended to require immediate notice, but no later than one calendar day.
- 4) Sunset Date. This bill currently has a sunset date of January 1, 2030. This bill is similar to SB 73, which does not have a sunset date. The committee should consider whether a sunset date is needed for this bill or if the contents of the bill should be made permanent.

5) Argument in Support. This bill’s sponsor, Attorney General Rob Bonta states the following:

California has a compelling interest in safeguarding the integrity, security, and continuity of election administration. Recent incidents locally and nationwide have demonstrated that improper seizure, retention, or handling of election records and voting equipment can compromise chain-of-custody protections and undermine public confidence in democratic institutions.

6) Argument in Opposition. In a letter opposing this bill, the Riverside County Sheriff’s Office states the following:

Regardless of the circumstances that prompted its introduction, [this bill] establishes a framework that threatens judicial independence, undermines the separation of powers, incites executive branch intrusion into active criminal investigations, and fails to adequately protect sensitive investigative information.

7) Double Referral. If approved by this committee, this bill will be referred to the Committee on Public Safety for additional consideration.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

SB 73 (Cervantes), Chapter 10, Statutes of 2026, restricted law enforcement agencies and officers from engaging in specified conduct related to elections.

SB 884 (Umberg) of 2026, among other provisions, requires a law enforcement officer to notify the AG or SOS of any suspected, planned, or violation of electioneering or arrests of specified crimes near a polling location and the disruption of the operation of a polling location. The bill is pending in the Assembly.

SB 851 (Cervantes), Chapter 238, Statutes of 2025, sought to address potential interference in California’s elections. Among other provisions, the bill required state agencies and local governments to provide written notice to the SOS and the AG within three court days after the agency or jurisdiction files or is served with a court action that contains a claim relating to elections arising under federal law.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	56 - 15
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	10 - 4
Assembly Elections Committee:	6 - 2

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Attorney General Rob Bonta

Support: League of Women Voters of California

Oppose: California State Sheriffs' Association
Riverside County Sheriff's Office

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1789 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26
Author: Boerner
Version: 6/8/26 Amended
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell

Subject: Political Reform Act of 1974: candidate trainings.

DIGEST

This bill requires candidates and campaign treasurers beginning in 2029 to take a training course on the requirements of the Political Reform Act (PRA) provided by the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC).

ANALYSIS

Existing law contained in the PRA:

- 1) Deems someone a candidate when:
 - a) The person is listed on the ballot or qualified as a write in for nomination or election to any elective office; or
 - b) The person receives a contribution, makes an expenditure, or allows someone else to do that for them to bring about their nomination or election to elective office.
- 2) Defines a “committee” as a person or persons who in a calendar year receives \$2,000 or more; makes independent expenditures of \$1,000 or more; or makes specified payments of \$10,000 or more. Within 10 days of becoming a committee, the committee shall register with the Secretary of State (SOS), who shares the registration with the relevant local filing officer.
- 3) Requires every committee that receives campaign contributions to have a treasurer, who shall authorize all expenditures the committee makes. If a committee does not have a treasurer, it may not receive contributions.
- 4) Requires candidates for elective office and committees formed to support or oppose candidates for public office, among others, to file periodic and activity-based campaign reports disclosing contributions, expenditures, and other related matters.

This bill:

- 1) Requires, starting in 2029, a candidate with a candidate controlled committee to complete a training course on the requirements of the PRA for campaigns for the office for which they are running. The bill further:
 - a) Requires a candidate to complete this training within 30 days of registering with the SOS, unless they have previously received the training for the same office. The bill provides a longer period of two months for those who must take the training because they registered before the training requirement takes effect on January 1, 2029.
 - b) Penalizes candidates who do not complete the training by making their campaign committees ineligible to receive campaign contributions until the candidate completes the training.
- 2) Requires, starting in 2029, a treasurer for a candidate controlled committee to complete a training course on the requirements of the PRA that apply to that committee. The bill further:
 - a) Requires a treasurer to complete this training within 30 days of the committee filing its registration, unless the treasurer has received the training in the previous four years. The bill provides a longer period of two months for those who must take the training because they registered before the training requirement takes effect on January 1, 2029.
 - b) Penalizes a committee whose treasurer does not complete the training by making the committee ineligible to receive campaign contributions until the treasurer completes the training.
- 3) Directs the FPPC to develop, maintain, and offer the training courses, which shall be available via an online platform, the internet, or an application. The candidate training may not exceed 90 minutes, and the treasurer training may not exceed two hours.
- 4) Exempts from the requirements of the bill anyone who has had to take a similar local government training, as determined by the FPPC.

BACKGROUND

Proposition 9, which appeared on the June 1974 ballot, created the PRA and established California's campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures. Proposition 9 also created the FPPC to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.

The PRA requires 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.

Violations of the PRA generally are subject to administrative, civil, and criminal penalties. Civil and criminal enforcement actions are rare, however, and enforcement actions for violations of the PRA typically are brought through the FPPC’s administrative enforcement process.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author’s Statement. Government transparency is important to maintain the public’s trust. This bill would require candidates and treasurers to take a training course with the FPPC to ensure that they understand and are prepared to comply with the PRA.
- 2) Arguments in Support. The FPPC, the bill’s sponsor, noting the bill’s requirement for candidates and treasurers to complete a training course on their duties under the PRA, writes in support:

The [PRA] includes requirements and restrictions that govern the conduct of campaigns in the state. Many of these provisions are triggered quickly upon becoming a candidate and raising funds, including rules on initial paperwork and registration, opening a campaign bank account, contribution limits and restrictions, permissible expenditures, reporting, and others. It is of great importance that candidates and treasurers are aware of their duties under the PRA and all associated deadlines.

Common Cause explains the bill “represents a practical and balanced approach to improving compliance with California’s campaign finance laws while maintaining strong transparency protections. By preserving disclosure requirements and strengthening education and training, the bill advances the PRA’s core goals of transparency, accountability, and public trust.”

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 2592 (Pacheco), also on today’s agenda, directs the FPPC, rather than the Legislature’s ethics committees, to provide training required of lobbyists.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	78 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	8 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: California Fair Political Practices Commission

Support: California Common Cause

Oppose: None received

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1853 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26
Author: Pellerin
Version: 6/8/26
Urgency: Yes **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell

Subject: Voter information guide: candidate statements

DIGEST

This bill limits what a candidate can include in their statement in the voter information guide (VIG).

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to mail a state VIG 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, candidate statements.
- 2) Allows any candidate for statewide elective office, the State Senate, or the State Assembly, who accepts voluntary campaign expenditure limits, to purchase space to place a candidate statement in the VIG that does not exceed 250 words. The statement may not refer to an opponent of the candidate. Statewide candidates' statements are published in the state VIG and those of legislative candidates in the relevant county VIGs.
- 3) Requires the SOS, at least 20 days prior to submitting the state VIG to the printer, to make the state VIG available for public examination. Any person eligible to vote may seek a writ of mandate or an injunction requiring any or all of the material in the candidate statement to be amended or deleted. The writ or injunction must issue upon clear and convincing proof that the material in question is false, misleading, or inconsistent with the requirements of state law and that issuance of the writ or injunction will not substantially interfere with the printing and distributing of official election materials.
- 4) Requires a county elections official to mail a county VIG to each voter in the jurisdiction prior to each election, except as specified. The county VIG must contain, among other things, candidate statements.
- 5) Allows candidates for local nonpartisan elective offices to submit a candidate's statement to appear in the county VIG guide provided. The statement:

- a) May include the candidate's name, age, and occupation, along with a brief description of 200 words (or up to 400 words if the local agency raises the cap) of their education and qualifications;
 - b) May not include the party affiliation of the candidate, or membership or activity in any partisan political organizations; and
 - c) May not in any way refer to other candidates for that office or any other candidate's qualifications, character, or activities. A county elections official may refuse to print a candidate statement that refers to another candidate.
- 6) Requires that each candidate statement be available for public review for 10 days during which time any voter in the jurisdiction where the election will be held may seek a writ of mandate or an injunction requiring any or all of the material in the candidate statement to be amended or deleted. The writ or injunction shall issue upon clear and convincing proof that the material in question is false, misleading or inconsistent with 5) above and that issuance of the writ or injunction will not substantially interfere with the printing and distributing official election materials.

This bill:

- 1) States the intent of the Legislature to establish clear, enforceable standards to ensure that the candidate statements in a VIG remain factual, relevant, and appropriate for an official state publication, while respecting the constitutional right to free speech.
- 2) Specifies that a candidate statement of qualifications included in either the state VIG or a county VIG must be limited to a recitation of the candidate's own:
 - a) Education;
 - b) Professional experience;
 - c) Public service;
 - d) Community Involvement; and
 - e) Qualifications for the office sought.
- 3) Prohibits a candidate statement from including:
 - a) References to other candidates;
 - b) Attacks, accusations, or characterizations of other individuals or groups;
 - c) Any reference, such as a link to an internet website, directing voters to external content;
 - d) Content that is obscene or profane or that incites hatred, violence, or discrimination;
 - e) Demonstrably false statements or materially misleading claims; and
 - f) Content unrelated to the candidate's qualifications for office.
- 4) Deems a candidate's statement final upon the deadline to file as a candidate for the office sought and prohibits a candidate from modifying a candidate statement after the filing deadline.

- 5) Directs the SOS and county election officials, after the filing deadline, to omit from the VIG any portion of a candidate statement that does not comply with the standards in 2) and 3) of this bill. The remainder of the candidate statement shall be included if it can stand alone and does not mislead voters. If that is not possible, the entire candidate statement may be omitted from the VIG.
- 6) Makes any fee paid by a candidate for the printing or inclusion of the candidate's statement in a VIG nonrefundable, even when all or a portion of the statement is omitted and deems payment of the fee as acknowledgement and acceptance of the requirements of this bill.
- 7) States that while reasonable efforts must be made to notify a candidate of the omission of content, the notice shall not delay the printing or distribution of the VIG and under no circumstances shall a candidate be entitled to a refund, credit, or reimbursement that arises from the enforcement of the requirements of this bill.
- 8) Permits the SOS to adopt regulations to implement its provisions.
- 9) Allows the SOS or a county elections official to refuse to print any candidate statement that does not comply with the provisions of this bill.
- 10) Allows any registered voter to seek judicial relief to enforce the bill's provisions. The bill directs a court to give priority to actions brought to enforce the bill's provisions due to the time-sensitive nature of the preparation and distribution of the VIG.
- 11) Includes an urgency clause so that its requirements are in place for the November 3, 2026, statewide general election.

BACKGROUND

Voter Information Guides. Proposition 9, which appeared on the June 1974 ballot, created the California Political Reform Act (PRA) and established California's campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures. Proposition 9 created the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.

Proposition 9 included provisions similar to existing law at that time requiring the preparation of a state ballot pamphlet, now called the state VIG. It also included a public examination process for the state ballot pamphlet similar to the one in existing law today.

State law provides for election officials to prepare VIGs and to distribute them prior to an election to each household with registered voters. VIGs are mailed, unless a voter opts to receive it electronically. For statewide elections, the SOS prepares and distributes the state VIG. County election officials prepare and distribute each county's VIG, which are tailored to each voter based on the contests that will appear on the voter's ballot.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. This bill comes in response to a candidate statement that appeared in the June 2026 Official State Voter Information Guide that contained no information about the candidate's education and qualifications; instead, it used the voter guide as a platform to share hateful and antisemitic rhetoric and links to external inappropriate content. This bill strengthens standards that appear in official state and county voter guides by establishing clear, enforceable standards requiring that candidate statements remain factual, relevant, and appropriate for an official state publication while respecting constitutional free speech protections.
- 2) History of One Candidate's VIG Submissions. The candidate the author references in comment 1) has had candidate statements in half a dozen California state VIGs dating back to the 2010 statewide primary election. None of which have provided information about this candidate's qualifications, have often provided links to websites, and certainly violate the provisions of this bill in terms of discriminatory, hateful, and misleading content. The past two times he has appeared in the VIG, 2024 and 2026, the SOS has included a disclaimer that the views expressed are his and not those of the SOS.

All VIGs containing his statements have been subject to the 20-day public examination period during which any person eligible to vote may ask a court to amend or delete a candidate statement upon clear and convincing proof that the statement is false, misleading, or inconsistent with the requirements of state law. The SOS reports that during the 20-day public examination period this year no challenge to his statement occurred.

Other candidates' statements in the state VIGs over the years have violated the requirements of this bill in many ways. These include comments extraneous to the person's qualifications, links to websites, and profanity.

- 3) An Opportunity to Correct. This bill deems a candidate's statement final upon the deadline to file as a candidate and prohibits a candidate from modifying a candidate statement after the filing deadline. It directs the SOS and county election officials, after that date, to omit from the VIG any portion of a candidate statement that does not comply with the bill's standards. While the bill states reasonable efforts must be made to notify a candidate of the omission of all or a portion of their statement from the VIG, the bill does not contemplate a system whereby a candidate could correct the portion of their statement an elections official deems contrary to the requirements this bill. The author may wish to consider amending the bill to provide a process for a candidate to cure problems with their submitted statement in time to be included in the VIG.
- 4) Arguments in Support. A large coalition of Jewish organizations write in support of the bill because it ensures that hate speech, antisemitism, and targeted attacks against any community have no place in California's official VIGs. They specifically note that, in this time when hate targeting vulnerable communities is surging, that content distributed under the authority of the State of California to 23 million households should not spread hateful ideas or amplify their reach in ways that have real consequences for real communities. These organizations support this bill

because “the official publications California sends into millions of homes [should] inform voters and strengthen democracy rather than undermine it.”

- 5) Oppose Unless Amended. The Peace and Freedom Party, which opposes this bill unless it is amended, submitted a letter stating the bill appears to ban two types of content many candidates include in their statements that are clearly not profane, hateful, untrue or misleading. One is all links to websites; the other is candidates’ positions on political issues of the day and plans for what they would do if elected.

The Peace and Freedom Party notes specifically that candidates who are running on a slate or with party support should be allowed to include links to those slate or party websites. Further, the party notes most candidate statements include some of the candidates’ positions on political issues and how the candidate proposes to address those if elected. While this content is arguably related to the candidates’ qualifications, it is not clearly so and may be excluded as “unrelated” if election officials are narrowing what is allowed in statements. The party states, “The language should be clarified to clearly allow such positions and plans, so long as they don’t violate other restrictions, in candidate statements.”

- 6) Refer to Committee on Rules. Amendments to this bill made on June 8, 2026, deleted the contents of the original bill and replaced it with the current language being heard today. Should the bill pass today, it will be referred to the Committee on Rules for a probable re-referral to the Committee on Judiciary, which would examine the constitutional issues the bill raises.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

SB 409 (Newman) of 2023 would have created an SOS county pilot program that would allow a candidate to include in the VIG a QR code link to a video statement. This bill also would have required, subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a candidate who is submitting a statement for a VIG to physically write the statement without reference to any outside materials at specified locations. This bill died on the Assembly Committee on Appropriations’ suspense file.

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: 30 Years After
 Adat Shalom – West Los Angeles
 ADL
 Agudath Israel of California
 AJC - Los Angeles
 AJC - San Diego
 AJC Northern California
 Bay Area Jewish Coalition Education and Advocacy
 Beverly Hills Synagogue
 Board of Rabbis of Southern California
 California Jewish Democrats
 California Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Contra Costa Jewish Democrats
Democrats for Israel – Los Angeles
JCC-Federation of San Luis Obispo
JCRC Bay Area
JCRC Santa Barbara County
JCRC, Jewish Long Beach
Jewish California (formerly JPAC)
Jewish Center for Justice
Jewish Community Action Network
Jewish Community Relations Council of Sacramento
Jewish Family and Children’s Center of San Francisco, the Peninsula,
Marina and Sonoma Counties
Jewish Family Service LA
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
Jewish Federation Bay Area
Jewish Federation of Greater Santa Barbara
Jewish Federation of Orange County
Jewish Federation of Palm Springs & the Desert
Jewish Federation of San Diego
Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys
Jewish Federation of the Sacramento Region
Jewish Federation of Ventura County
Jewish Free Loan Association
Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation
Jewish Silicon Valley
Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Department of California
JFCS East Bay
JFCS Long Beach and Orange County
Mosaic Law Congregation
Northern California Council of Jewish Democratic Clubs
Northern California Jewish Labor Committee
Oakland Jewish Alliance
Simon Wiesenthal Center, INC.
StandWithUs
Tam Union Together
Valley Beth Shalom
Young Israel of Century City

Oppose: Peace and Freedom Party of California

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1919 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26
Author: Pellerin and Addis
Version: 2/12/26
Urgency: Yes **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Scott Matsumoto

Subject: Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District: transactions and use tax: qualified voter initiative.

DIGEST

This bill permits the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (SC Metro) to impose special taxes by an initiative.

ANALYSIS

- 1) Provides that the initiative is the power of the electors to propose statutes and amendments to the California Constitution and to adopt or reject them. A state initiative measure must receive a majority of votes cast thereon in order to take effect.
- 2) Permits initiative powers to be exercised by the electors of each city or county under procedures that the Legislature shall provide. If a majority of the voters voting on a proposed local initiative ordinance vote in its favor, the initiative takes effect.
- 3) Provides that ordinances may be enacted by most districts through the initiative process, with the following exceptions:
 - a) Irrigation districts.
 - b) A district formed under a law that does not provide a procedure for elections.
 - c) A district formed under a law which does not provide for action by ordinance.
 - d) A district governed by an election procedure that permits voters, in electing the district's directors or trustees, to cast more than one vote per voter.
 - e) A district in which the directors are empowered to cast more than one vote per director when acting on any matter.

The term "district," for these purposes, includes any regional agency that has the power to tax, to regulate land use, or to condemn and purchase land.

- 4) Prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing a general tax unless it is submitted to the electorate and approved by a majority vote. The general

tax proposal must be submitted to the voters at an election that is consolidated with a regularly scheduled general election for members of the governing body of the local government.

- 5) Prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing any special tax unless it is submitted to the electorate and approved by a two-thirds vote. Any tax levied by a special purpose district or agency is a special tax.
- 6) Provides for the creation of SC Metro, subject to the approval of electors in the district, and authorizes it to operate a public transit system in incorporated and unincorporated territory within Santa Cruz County.
- 7) Authorizes an authority to impose a retail transaction and use tax (TUT) ordinance applicable in the incorporated and unincorporated territory of a county if the ordinance is adopted by a two-thirds vote of the authority and the tax is subsequently approved by voters.
- 8) Requires a county transportation expenditure plan to be prepared for the expenditure of the revenues for the period during which the tax is to be imposed, and prohibits the plan from being adopted until it has received the approval of the board of supervisors and of the city councils representing both a majority of the cities in the county and a majority of the population residing in the incorporated areas of the county.

This bill:

- 1) Specifies that a TUT authorized under existing law in SC Metro may be imposed by initiative, including an initiative for which a petition has been circulated on or after January 1, 2026.
- 2) Provides all the following for the purposes of a TUT proposed by SC Metro or by initiative on or after January 1, 2026:
 - a) The ordinance imposing the TUT must be submitted to voters of Santa Cruz County at a special election that is consolidated with a statewide election.
 - b) The measure must comply with existing provisions of the Elections Code related to district ballot measures.
 - c) SC Metro must reimburse Santa Cruz County for the incremental costs incurred by the county for submitting such a measure to the voters and includes the following:
 - i) The cost to prepare, review, and revise the impartial analysis of the measure.
 - ii) The cost to translate ballot materials into languages other than English.
 - iii) Additional costs that exceed costs incurred for other races or measures appearing on the same ballot in the county, including the printing and mailing of ballot materials and the canvass of the vote of the measure.

- d) Requires SC Metro's legal counsel to prepare the impartial analysis of the measure, rather than having the analysis be prepared by the county counsel as is required under existing law. The analysis prepared by SC Metro's counsel must be subject to review and revision by the county counsel.
 - e) Specifies that the Santa Cruz County elections official shall serve as the elections official for the purpose of administering a ballot measure for SC Metro.
- 3) Contains an urgency clause.

BACKGROUND

Initiatives. The California Constitution guarantees the right of voters to propose statutes and amendments to the Constitution and to adopt or reject them. It also requires the Legislature to provide for initiative powers that may be exercised by voters in cities and counties. Although not required by the California Constitution, the Legislature has adopted procedures in the Elections Code to allow voters to exercise initiative powers in some other local districts.

Other types of measures can appear on the ballot for voters' consideration. These include referenda, recalls, and measures that a governing body places on the ballot.

Upland Decision. The California Constitution prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing a special tax unless it is approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate. The California Constitution also imposes other restrictions on taxes imposed by local governments, including a requirement that a general tax must be approved by the voters at a general election for members of the local government's governing body, except in an emergency.

In August 2017, the California Supreme Court issued its ruling in *California Cannabis Coalition v. City of Upland*, 3 Cal. 5th 924 (2017). The court was asked to address whether the requirement that a local government must submit a proposed general tax to the voters at a regularly scheduled general election applies to measures that are placed on the ballot not by the governing body, but instead by the voters through the initiative process.

The court concluded the California Constitution "does not limit voters' power to propose and adopt initiatives concerning taxation," and that local general taxes proposed through the initiative process could appear on the ballot at elections other than regularly scheduled general elections. In reaching that conclusion, the majority opinion noted the court has consistently taken the position that courts should protect and liberally construe the people's initiative power, and that it would not construe the California Constitution as limiting that power "[u]nless a provision explicitly constrains the initiative power or otherwise provides a similarly clear indication that its purpose includes constraining the voters' initiative power."

The *Upland* decision did not directly address whether a local initiative measure that proposes special taxes must comply with the two-thirds vote requirement found in Article XIII C, Section 2, Subdivision (d) of the California Constitution.

Since *Upland*, several lower courts have been asked to consider whether local special taxes imposed through the initiative process require a two-thirds vote for approval. California Appellate Courts have considered seven such cases and have uniformly concluded that the two-thirds vote requirement in California Constitution does not apply to special taxes proposed through the initiative process. In six of those seven cases, the California Supreme Court declined to review the Appellate Court decision. In the seventh case, no review was sought.

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District. According to their website, SC Metro was established in 1968 with a mission of providing environmentally sustainable transportation to Santa Cruz County and operates countywide, fixed route, and commuter services. SC Metro operates 104 buses on 20 fixed-routes and 32 paratransit vehicles.

SC Metro's Initiative Effort. There is currently an effort to place an initiative measure that proposes to implement a sales tax to support SC Metro. According to the Santa Cruz County Clerk, the petition was cleared for circulation for signatures on February 20, 2026. The proponents have until August 19, 2026, to submit 10,417 signatures in order for the measure to be considered at a future statewide election. The next statewide election after the November 3, 2026, statewide general election is scheduled for March 7, 2028.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. Efficient and well-planned public transit is an important infrastructure for every city. To address growing demands and needs, in 2022, SC Metro rolled out "Reimagine METRO" to expand and improve their service network. This effort has subsequently resulted in significantly increased ridership by 43%. This service expansion was partly funded by state dollars that will run out in 2026. Without additional funds, service reduction and job cuts will occur. In early 2026, local voters formed the coalition "Friends of METRO" to place a citizen's initiative to secure a local transaction and use tax to benefit SC Metro and prevent this loss of service. Unfortunately, there is ambiguity in existing law about whether voters in the district may use the citizen's initiative process. This is what this bill seeks to address and also outlines election procedures in SC Metro's statutes to explicitly allow local electors to place a citizen's initiative on the ballot.
- 2) District Initiatives. Existing law already provides for an initiative process in some, but not all, districts. State law provides the initiative process is not available in a district "formed under a law that does not provide a procedure for elections." That being said, the Madera County Transportation Authority became the first special district without a clear exception from the Elections Code to approve a special tax as a majority vote initiative in November 2024.

By providing that voters in these districts may impose a TUT for transportation purposes through the initiative process, this bill seeks to resolve any ambiguity about whether the initiative process is available in those districts for that purpose. It should be noted that this bill does not resolve any existing ambiguity about whether voters in those districts may pursue initiative measures that do not meet the requirements within existing law about special taxes.

- 3) Majority versus Two-Thirds. As previously mentioned, the California Constitution prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing a special tax unless it is approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate. An initiative requires a majority vote of the electorate to be approved.
- 4) Double Referral. If approved by this committee, this bill will be referred to the Committee on Transportation for further consideration.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 2484 (Alvarez) of 2026, among other provisions, specifies that special taxes may be imposed through the initiative process in the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System.

SB 512 (Pérez) of 2025, would have specified that voters of a district may impose TUTs for transportation purposes by a citizen’s initiative. SB 512 was vetoed by Governor Newsom who stated: “This bill reaffirms that jurisdictions may use the initiative process to impose transactions and use taxes for transportation purposes. The courts have consistently and repeatedly affirmed this existing authority; therefore, this bill is unnecessary.”

SB 63 (Wiener), Chapter 740, Statutes of 2025, established the Public Transit Revenue Measure District including Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties and the City and County of San Francisco, and specified that special taxes may be imposed through the initiative process in that district, among other provisions.

SB 904 (Dodd), Chapter 866, Statutes of 2024, specified that special taxes may be imposed through the initiative process in the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District, among other provisions.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	54 - 20
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	9 - 4
Assembly Local Government:	8 - 2
Assembly Elections Committee:	6 - 2

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District
California Safety and Legislative Board of SMART – Transportation Division

Support: None received

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

-- END --

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2484 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26
Author: Alvarez
Version: 5/18/26
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Scott Matsumoto

Subject: San Diego Metropolitan Transit System: transactions and use tax: voter initiatives.

DIGEST

This bill permits the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (SD MTS) to adopt a retail transaction and use tax (TUT) ordinance by an initiative.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that the initiative is the power of the electors to propose statutes and amendments to the California Constitution and to adopt or reject them. A state initiative measure must receive a majority of votes cast thereon in order to take effect.
- 2) Permits initiative powers to be exercised by the electors of each city or county under procedures that the Legislature shall provide. If a majority of the voters voting on a proposed local initiative ordinance vote in its favor, the initiative takes effect.
- 3) Provides that ordinances may be enacted by most districts through the initiative process, with the following exceptions:
 - a) Irrigation districts.
 - b) A district formed under a law that does not provide a procedure for elections.
 - c) A district formed under a law which does not provide for action by ordinance.
 - d) A district governed by an election procedure that permits voters, in electing the district's directors or trustees, to cast more than one vote per voter.
 - e) A district in which the directors are empowered to cast more than one vote per director when acting on any matter.

The term "district," for these purposes, includes any regional agency that has the power to tax, to regulate land use, or to condemn and purchase land.

- 4) Prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing a general tax unless it is submitted to the electorate and approved by a majority vote. The general tax proposal must be submitted to the voters at an election that is consolidated with a regularly scheduled general election for members of the governing body of the local government.
- 5) Prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing any special tax unless it is submitted to the electorate and approved by a two-thirds vote. Any tax levied by a special purpose district or agency is a special tax.
- 6) Establishes the SD MTS and authorizes it to maintain and operate public transit systems and related transportation facilities and services as it deems necessary.
- 7) Permits the SD MTS board to adopt a TUT ordinance applicable to the entirety of, or a portion of, the jurisdiction of SD MTS. The TUT ordinance takes effect at the close of the polls on the day of the election at which the ordinance is adopted by the voters.
- 8) Requires San Diego County to conduct an election called by the SD MTS board and provides that such an election shall be called and conducted in the same manner as existing law provides for the conduct of elections by a county.
- 9) Requires a county transportation expenditure plan to be prepared for the expenditure of the revenues for the period during which the tax is to be imposed, and prohibits the plan from being adopted until it has received the approval of the board of supervisors and of the city councils representing both a majority of the cities in the county and a majority of the population residing in the incorporated areas of the county.

This bill:

- 1) Permits a TUT authorized under existing law in SD MTS to be imposed by an initiative.
- 2) Provides a TUT imposed in SD MTS must not be considered for purposes of an existing law that limits the combined rate of all TUT taxes imposed in a county to 2%.
- 3) Contains various findings and declarations about SD MTS, its services and operations, and the need and demand for public transit in San Diego County.
- 4) Makes technical and conforming changes.

BACKGROUND

Initiatives. The California Constitution guarantees the right of voters to propose statutes and amendments to the Constitution and to adopt or reject them. It also requires the Legislature to provide for initiative powers that may be exercised by voters in cities and counties. Although not required by the California Constitution, the Legislature has adopted procedures in the Elections Code to allow voters to exercise initiative powers in

some other local districts.

Other types of measures can appear on the ballot for voters' consideration. These include referenda, recalls, and measures that a governing body places on the ballot.

Upland Decision. The California Constitution prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing a special tax unless it is approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate. The California Constitution also imposes other restrictions on taxes imposed by local governments, including a requirement that a general tax must be approved by the voters at a general election for members of the local government's governing body, except in an emergency.

In August 2017, the California Supreme Court issued its ruling in *California Cannabis Coalition v. City of Upland*, 3 Cal. 5th 924 (2017). The court was asked to address whether the requirement that a local government must submit a proposed general tax to the voters at a regularly scheduled general election applies to measures that are placed on the ballot not by the governing body, but instead by the voters through the initiative process.

The court concluded the California Constitution "does not limit voters' power to propose and adopt initiatives concerning taxation," and that local general taxes proposed through the initiative process could appear on the ballot at elections other than regularly scheduled general elections. In reaching that conclusion, the majority opinion noted the court has consistently taken the position that courts should protect and liberally construe the people's initiative power, and that it would not construe the California Constitution as limiting that power "[u]nless a provision explicitly constrains the initiative power or otherwise provides a similarly clear indication that its purpose includes constraining the voters' initiative power."

The *Upland* decision did not directly address whether a local initiative measure that proposes special taxes must comply with the two-thirds vote requirement found in Article XIII C, Section 2, Subdivision (d) of the California Constitution.

Since *Upland*, several lower courts have been asked to consider whether local special taxes imposed through the initiative process require a two-thirds vote for approval. California Appellate Courts have considered seven such cases and have uniformly concluded that the two-thirds vote requirement in California Constitution does not apply to special taxes proposed through the initiative process. In six of those seven cases, the California Supreme Court declined to review the Appellate Court decision. In the seventh case, no review was sought.

San Diego Metropolitan Transit System. SD MTS was created by the Legislature in 1975 pursuant to SB 101 (Mills), Chapter 294, Statutes of 1975, for the purposes of planning and implementing transit services in portions of San Diego County. The agency is also responsible for allocating certain transit funds within its area of jurisdiction.

SD MTS' board currently consists of 15 appointed members. This includes the following:

- Four by the City of San Diego
- Two by the City of Chula Vista
- One by each of the cities of Coronado, El Cajon, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, National City, Poway, and Santee
- One by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

According to their website, SD MTS currently serves approximately three million people with light rail, bus, and freight services. According to MTS, it generates 80 million annual passenger trips or 250,000 trips each weekday using a fleet with more than 160 trolley cars and 750 buses.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. In Assembly District 80 and across San Diego County, the services provided by SD MTS are not optional, they are essential. In Fiscal Year 2025, SD MTS averaged more than 250,000 weekday trips, with nearly 78% of riders relying on transit as their primary means of getting around. These are working families, students, and seniors who depend on transit every single day. We are also seeing a significant rise in youth ridership, which has increased by 71% between 2022 and 2025, demonstrating that younger generations are choosing public transit and reinforcing the need to invest in a system that meets their future. If we do not address our public transit infrastructure's growing budget deficit, we risk severely limiting access to jobs, education, and essential services for the very communities that rely on it most.
- 2) District Initiatives. Existing law already provides for an initiative process in some, but not all, districts. State law provides the initiative process is not available in a district "formed under a law that does not provide a procedure for elections." That being said, the Madera County Transportation Authority became the first special district without a clear exception from the Elections Code to approve a special tax as a majority vote initiative in November 2024.

By providing that voters in these districts may impose a TUT for transportation purposes through the initiative process, this bill seeks to resolve any ambiguity about whether the initiative process is available in those districts for that purpose. It should be noted that this bill does not resolve any existing ambiguity about whether voters in those districts may pursue initiative measures that do not meet the requirements within existing law about special taxes.

- 3) Majority versus Two-Thirds. As previously mentioned, the California Constitution prohibits a local government from imposing, extending, or increasing a special tax unless it is approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate. An initiative requires a majority vote of the electorate to be approved.
- 4) Effective Date. Under existing law for SD MTS, if a TUT is approved by voters, the ordinance takes effect at the close of the polls (8 p.m.) on Election Day. While not directly changed by this bill, the author should consider whether the effective date and time should be changed to when the election results are certified instead of when the polls close on Election Day. Elections results are not typically known on

the night of the election and may take additional time before knowing if a measure is truly adopted by voters.

- 5) Argument in Support. In a letter supporting this bill, the City of Chula Vista stated, in part, the following:

[This bill] appropriately recognizes that local funding is essential to sustaining and improving transit service. Without additional resources, [SD MTS] will be forced to consider service reductions at a time when transit demand is rebounding and when San Diego is leading the state in housing production per capita. Robust transit service is necessary to support transit-oriented development and support continued housing growth.

- 6) Argument in Opposition. In a coalition letter opposing this bill, the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, California Taxpayers Association, and the California Association of Realtors, stated, in part, the following:

[This bill] would make it easier to enact a transactions and use tax in the [SD MTS] (from two-thirds to a bare majority), in an area that already has a very high tax burden. This tax is among the most regressive forms of taxation and has an especially heavy impact on low-income Californians because it increases the cost of necessities. As inflation, tariffs, shipping costs, and other factors drive up the prices of goods, the sales tax burden grows in tandem, further straining household budgets and exacerbating economic inequality.

- 7) Double Referral. If approved by this committee, this bill will be referred to the Committee on Transportation for further consideration.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 1919 (Pellerin) of 2026 permits the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (SC Metro) to impose special taxes by an initiative.

SB 512 (Pérez) of 2025, would have specified that voters of a district may impose TUTs for transportation purposes by a citizen's initiative. SB 512 was vetoed by Governor Newsom who stated: "This bill reaffirms that jurisdictions may use the initiative process to impose transactions and use taxes for transportation purposes. The courts have consistently and repeatedly affirmed this existing authority; therefore, this bill is unnecessary."

SB 63 (Wiener), Chapter 740, Statutes of 2025, established the Public Transit Revenue Measure District including Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties and the City and County of San Francisco, and specified that special taxes may be imposed through the initiative process in that district, among other provisions.

SB 904 (Dodd), Chapter 866, Statutes of 2024, specified that special taxes may be imposed through the initiative process in the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District, among other provisions.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	46 - 21
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 4
Assembly Local Government:	8 - 2
Assembly Elections Committee:	6 - 2

POSITIONS

Sponsor: San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Support: Council President Joe Lacava, District 1, City of San Diego
 Council President Pro Tem Kent Lee, District 6, City of San Diego
 Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, District 3, City of San Diego
 Councilmember Raul A. Campillo, District 7, City of San Diego
 Councilmember Vivian Moreno, District 8, City of San Diego
 Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera, District 9, City of San Diego
 Circulate Planning and Policy
 City of Chula Vista
 City of La Mesa
 Environmental Health Coalition
 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 465
 Logan Heights Community Development Corporation
 Mid-City CAN
 Mundo Gardens
 North County Transit – San Diego Railroad
 RideSD
 Streets Are For Everyone

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

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on the Legislature's policies against harassment, including sexual harassment, in connection with lobbying activities.

- 3) Requires the FPPC to consult with the appropriate legislative ethics committees in developing the training course curriculum and gives the legislative ethics committees final approval over content relating to the Legislature's policies against harassment.
- 4) Requires the training course to be available on-demand through an online platform, internet webpage, or application.
- 5) Permits the FPPC to impose a \$50 fee per lobbyist for taking the training course and to adjust that fee for inflation in every odd-numbered year, rounded to the nearest \$10.
- 6) Requires funds collected by the Assembly and Senate Legislative Ethics Committees from lobbyist training that are unused before January 1, 2029, to be transferred to the FPPC for purposes of developing the lobbyist training.

BACKGROUND

Proposition 9, which appeared on the June 1974 ballot, created the California Political Reform Act (PRA) and established California's system of regulating lobbying activity, campaign finance, and conflicts of interest for public officials. Proposition 9 created the FPPC to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA. The PRA regulates lobbyists, including requiring lobbyists, lobbying firms, and lobbyist employers to register with the Secretary of State and to file periodic reports disclosing their activities.

SB 1738 (Roberti), Chapter 84, Statutes of 1990, also known as the "Ethics in Government Act of 1990," enacted a comprehensive ethics reform package. Among other provisions, SB 1738 required legislators, designated employees of the Legislature, and lobbyists to take periodic ethics orientation courses, conducted by the legislative ethics committees in the Assembly and Senate.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. Transferring lobbyist training to the FPPC ensures consistency, accountability, and public trust. As the state's primary authority on political ethics and campaign finance, the FPPC is best equipped to provide accurate, standardized training aligned with current laws. Ultimately, this transfer promotes a more cohesive and transparent framework, one that not only supports compliance but also reinforces the ethical standards expected in California's governmental processes.
- 2) Arguments in Support. Writing in support, the FPPC, the bill's sponsor, states:

While Assembly and Senate Ethics Counsel do an excellent job conducting the training, the FPPC is more appropriately suited to provide this training as the experts on the state's lobbying laws and the agency charged with advising on the lobbying rules outside of this training. Shifting to an on-demand model will also assist lobbyists in fulfilling their training duty.

California Common Cause notes that the bill “makes a practical and important update to California’s ethics framework” and represents a thoughtful and well-calibrated improvement to California’s ethics infrastructure.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 1789 (Boerner), also on today’s agenda, requires candidates and campaign treasurers beginning in 2029 to take an FPPC-provided training course on the requirements of the PRA.

AB 2055 (Levine), Chapter 964, Statutes of 2018, requires that lobbying ethics courses include information on the policies against harassment, including sexual harassment, established by each house of the Legislature.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	78 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	15 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	8 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: California Fair Political Practices Commission

Support: California Common Cause

Oppose: None received

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2655 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26
Author: Valencia
Version: 2/20/26
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell

Subject: Campaign funds: security expenses: security personnel.

DIGEST

This bill requires when campaign funds are used to pay for security personnel those personnel must be licensed by the State of California's Bureau of Security and Investigative Services.

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) allowing a candidate or elected officer to use unlimited campaign funds until 2029 and then \$10,000 year thereafter 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 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 the candidate or elected officer one year after leaving office or after the conclusion of the threat, whichever comes later, to 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 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.
- 9) Creates the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services to license and regulate the alarm, locksmith, private investigator, private security services, and repossession industries.

This bill mandates that campaign funds spent on security personnel may only pay those who are licensed by the state's Bureau of Security and Investigative Services.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. This bill requires that campaign funds only be used to pay for personal security services if the security personnel are properly licensed by the California Bureau of Security and Investigative Services. By ensuring security personnel meet California's existing training and licensing standards, personnel will be prepared to protect candidates, elected officials and their families from political violence.
- 2) Arguments in Support. The sponsor of the bill, the FPPC, writes in support:

There are currently no requirements or guidelines for a committee that wishes to use campaign funds to hire security personnel. Under existing law, a committee would be permitted to hire any person to provide security, even if that person had no background, training, or expertise in providing security services.

[This bill] would provide important clarification by authorizing the use of campaign funds to pay security personnel only if the security personnel hold the appropriate license issued by the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services.

This bill will help ensure that any security personnel hired to protect a candidate, elected officer, or their staff or family have the appropriate training and experience to effectively respond to emergency situations.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 789 (Bonta), Chapter 621, Statutes of 2025, 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.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	66 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	14 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	8 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: California Fair Political Practices Commission

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

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- 3) Clarifies what information and data county election officials must compile and make available to the Legislature or any appropriate designee of the Legislature for the purposes of redistricting and for the computerized database for redistricting. The data and information shall include:
 - a) Precinct maps for registration and election precincts indicating boundaries of incorporated cities, wards or city council districts, school districts, judicial districts, Assembly districts, senatorial districts, congressional districts, State Board of Equalization (BOE) districts, and county supervisorial districts.
 - b) Complete unredacted election returns for each election precinct, and election returns for each registration and election precinct that reflects the number of registered voters and vote total for all ballots casts, including the number of votes cast by mail and at polling places.
 - c) A master street index file that may be used to identify the associated precinct for a given street address in the county.
- 4) Requires the complete unredacted election returns to be received and maintained on a confidential basis and be protected from public disclosure.
- 5) Prohibits election returns from being publicly posted or disclosed for any contest in precincts in which fewer than 10 voters cast a ballot at an election. In precincts where fewer than 10 voters cast a ballot, information about the total number of people who voted at the precinct and a breakdown of the number of people who voted by political party preference may be publicly disclosed.

BACKGROUND

The Statewide Database. The Statewide Database (SWDB) is the official redistricting database for California and publishes electoral and demographic datasets continuously.

The database was originally created in 1981 for the California State Assembly. In 1993, the California Legislature voted to house the database in a nonpartisan environment and moved its location to the University of California (UC). It is now housed in the UC Berkeley School of Law and the data is available to the public free of charge.

The SWDB provides data used for state legislative, congressional, BOE, and local redistrictings. County election officials provide the SWDB with precinct level data about voter registration and voting results, which becomes the electoral dataset. The U.S. Census Bureau annually publishes the Citizen Voting Age Populations report, which is a breakdown of the race and ethnicity of citizens and voting aged citizens. The U.S. Census Bureau also conducts the decennial census and releases the Redistricting Data Summary Files. The electoral dataset, the Citizens Voting Age Populations report, and the decennial census dataset are compiled into California's official redistricting database. Although state legislative, congressional, and BOE redistricting is done through the California Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC), the CRC still uses the data when redistricting. The Legislature helps ensure the SWDB remains complete and accurate.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author’s Statement. Although Propositions 11 (2008) and 20 (2010) transferred responsibility for drawing legislative, congressional, and BOE district boundaries to the CRC, Proposition 11 expressly preserved the Legislature’s longstanding role in preparing and maintaining the state’s official redistricting database. Maintaining that database involves ongoing data collection and processing, including the collection of precinct maps and precinct-level election returns from every county for each statewide election. This bill streamlines that data collection process. It also takes steps to protect voter privacy and to codify the categories of information counties have been required to provide for redistricting purposes in recent statewide elections.

- 2) Current Collection of Data. County election officials are required to provide relevant information to the Legislature and its designee for the use of redistricting. The SOS, and legislative staff if needed, work with the SWDB staff to collect necessary data and information from county election officials. Data collection from county election officials can be time and labor exhaustive for SWDB staff. The SOS, before each statewide election, sends a memo to county election officials outlining the necessary data and information the SWDB needs to receive. The memo also includes instructions on how to send the data. A memo sent to county election officials on February 25, 2026, provided election officials deadlines to submit the information and options to provide the data electronically through a link, an email, or through mail delivery. County election officials rarely submit data through mail delivery. This bill codifies the secure electronic process for data submission the SOS provides and many counties already use, as well as, the information that county election officials have been regularly asked to submit.

Additionally, county election officials have raised concerns regarding the release of precinct level election results that could compromise the ballot secrecy in precincts with few voters. This bill would codify a practice the SWDB implemented to protect voter privacy in precincts with fewer than 10 voters.

- 3) Double referral. Should this bill pass this committee, it will next be heard in the Committee on Judiciary.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 1734 (Elections & Redistricting Committee), Chapter 515, Statutes of 2007, required elections officials to send election results to the SOS in an electronic format, in part to assist the SWDB in its work to build the state’s official redistricting database.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	78 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	15 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	8 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

-- END --