



DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Bowen Offers Do and Don't List for November Election

SACRAMENTO – Secretary of State Debra Bowen today reminded voters of some key voting rights and responsibilities to keep in mind for the November 2, 2010, Statewide General Election, and emphasized next week's deadline to register to vote.

“While there are plenty of choices on the November ballot, the most fundamental choice is to register to vote and then make your voice heard on Election Day,” said Secretary Bowen, California's chief elections officer. “As a voter, it's important to know how the law works to protect your right to vote. For instance, you have the right to vote by mail before Election Day; just make sure your ballot is turned in to a polling place or your county elections office by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day so it can be counted.”

October 18 is the last day to register to vote in the upcoming election. Californians can register to vote by filling out a form online at www.sos.ca.gov/nvrc/fedform, then printing, signing and mailing it. People can also pick up a voter registration form at any county elections office, public library or U.S. post office.

The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is October 26. To request a vote-by-mail ballot, a voter can use the application printed on the sample ballot booklet mailed by his or her county elections official or go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/vote-by-mail/pdf/fill-in-vote-by-mail-app-instruct.pdf.

The Secretary of State's Official Voter Information Guide was mailed to every voting household in California, and is available in audio and print versions at www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov. Additional copies are available from the Secretary of State's office, county elections offices, public libraries and every polling place. County sample ballot booklets offer information about local candidates and measures.

Secretary Bowen also offers a toll-free Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE (8683) that voters can call to ask election-related questions or to confidentially report potential election fraud or voter intimidation.

A list of key voter tips is attached.

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November 2 General Election Do and Don't List

DO: Register to vote or double-check your registration by October 18. People may register to vote in California if they are United States citizens, reside in California, are at least 18 years old by Election Day, are not in prison or on parole for a felony conviction, and have not been judged by a court to be mentally incompetent. To check your voter registration, use a new portal on the Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/registration-status/index.htm.

DON'T: Offer incentives to voters for agreeing to vote for or against a particular person or measure. This is illegal under state and federal law.

DO: Choose whether to vote at a polling place or vote by mail, and vote by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Any California voter can vote by mail (formerly known as absentee voting). The deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot from your county elections office is October 26. Even vote-by-mail ballots must be turned in by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day at a polling place in your county or at your county elections office. Postmarks do not count for ballots.

If you prefer to vote in person, polls will be open between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on November 2. If you are in line when the polls close, you will be allowed to vote.

DON'T: Campaign for votes, solicit petition signatures or wear campaign materials within 100 feet of a polling place. Electioneering in the immediate area around polling places is illegal in California.

DO: Know that you may still vote even if you have left your home because of a foreclosure, fire or disaster. If you have not formed a new permanent residence, you may vote where you are registered.

DO: Know your voting rights at the polls. Ask a poll worker for assistance if you don't understand your voting system. If you make a mistake on your ballot, ask a poll worker for a new ballot.

If, for any reason, your name is not on the list at your polling place, you have the right to cast a provisional ballot. The provisional ballot will be counted after your county elections office has confirmed that you are registered to vote in your county and you did not already vote elsewhere in the election.

DON'T: Sit on the sidelines during this important election. Consider other ways to get involved in your democracy. Be a poll worker, host a ballot study group with friends, and encourage others to vote.

DO: Be familiar with voting resources. The Secretary of State's office offers a variety of resources in eight languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese and American Sign Language), including toll-free hotlines and online, large-print and audio versions of the Secretary of State's Official Voter Information Guide. More information on any of these services is at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_multi.htm.