



# DEBRA BOWEN

## CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

### NEWS RELEASE

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## Secretary of State Bowen Marks 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Of California Direct Democracy, Women's Right to Vote

**SACRAMENTO** – As California's centennial anniversaries of direct democracy and women's suffrage near, Secretary of State Debra Bowen today rounded up related trends and trivia.

Progressive reforms approved in a statewide special election on October 10, 1911, granted women the right to vote and amended the state constitution to establish the initiative, referendum, and recall processes.

Issues addressed in other measures on the 1911 state ballot included:

- Workers compensation
- Eminent domain
- Property taxes
- Public utilities
- Railroad commission
- Judiciary
- School textbooks
- Weights and measures

“Progressives fought for years to put more power in more people's hands and the 1911 election took democracy in a new direction,” said Secretary Bowen, California's chief elections officer and custodian of the State Archives. “While the system is far from perfect, voters have been using some very powerful tools to counter their elected representatives for the last century.”

The initiative process enables a person to go straight to the voters to create or change laws, or amend the state's constitution. The referendum process makes it possible for voters to repeal laws passed by the Legislature. Through the recall process, voters may remove elected officials from office. A statewide ballot measure can be approved by a majority vote. (In addition to direct democracy, measures can also be added to the state ballot by the Legislature.)

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**1911 – 2011: California Women’s Suffrage and Direct Democracy by the Numbers**

- California women won the right to vote by just 3,587 votes. Eight counties – Alameda, Amador, Marin, Monterey, Orange, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Ventura – had majority votes in opposition to Proposition 4 (Rights of Suffrage) of 1911.
- California was the sixth state to give women the right to vote. National women’s suffrage was not ratified until 1920.
- Voters in 1911 favored Proposition 7 (Initiative and Referendum) by a margin of three to one (168,744 to 52,093 votes).
- Since 1911, more than 1,675 initiatives have been circulated; 348 initiatives have qualified for a statewide ballot. Approximately one-third of all statewide initiatives that qualified for the ballot have been approved by voters.
- Over the last 100 years, 72 referenda have been filed, 47 have qualified for the ballot, and 19 were successful.
- Since 1913, there have been 154 recall attempts of state officials (legislators and constitutional officers such as governor). Nine recall efforts collected enough signatures to qualify for the ballot and of those, five officials were removed from office.
- Of the five state officials who have been removed from elected office in the last 100 years, two were State Senators (in 1913 and 1914), two were Assemblymembers (in 1994 and 1995), and one was a Governor (in 2003).

For data related to local ballot measures and recalls, contact county elections offices.

For more about initiatives, referenda, and recalls – including historical data and current efforts, go to [www.sos.ca.gov/elections](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections).

Keep up with the latest California election news and trivia by following [@CASOSvote](https://twitter.com/CASOSvote) on Twitter. To sign up for ballot measure updates via email, RSS feed or Twitter, go to [www.sos.ca.gov/multimedia](http://www.sos.ca.gov/multimedia).

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