

# DEBRA BOWEN

## CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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### **Bowen Applauds Postal Service's Scaled Back Shutdowns in Presidential Election Year**

*Planned closures reduced, but voters should still mail back ballots early*

**SACRAMENTO** – After calling on the United States Postal Service (USPS) to delay its plan to shut down 15 California hubs in a presidential election year, California Secretary of State Debra Bowen today applauded the USPS decision to drastically scale back its closure plan.

Earlier this summer, the USPS closed mail processing centers in Modesto, Pasadena and Burlingame. The USPS will complete a Petaluma facility closure by September 1.

“This is good news for millions of voters who rely on the mail to vote,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “Voter turnout is always highest during a presidential election, so mail volume will be up. Given the slowed delivery times when three California processing hubs closed in 2011, voters should still allow plenty of time for their ballots to get back to county elections offices.”

Vote-by-mail ballots must be received by county elections offices by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day in order to be counted (postmarks do not count). After elections officials in California reported a dramatic increase in mail delivery times from one to three days to as much as seven days during local elections last year, Secretary Bowen called on the USPS to delay its closure plan and urged congressional and state legislative leaders to join her in the effort.

“While I certainly sympathize with the financial challenges faced by the USPS... pre-election USPS closures would have a devastating impact on democracy,” Bowen wrote in a February 22 letter to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe. Delaying many closures “will give elections officials across the country the time to educate voters about USPS changes in service that could double the time it takes for a vote-by-mail ballot to go from a voter’s home to the local elections office.”

Vote-by-mail turnout in California hit an all-time high earlier this year when 65 percent of voters who participated in the June 5 Presidential Primary Election voted through the mail.

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