



NEWS RELEASE

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New Motor Voter Act Clears State Senate

SACRAMENTO – Legislation sponsored by California Secretary of State Alex Padilla to modernize California’s motor voter registration system was approved by the State Senate today. AB 1461 is jointly authored by Assemblymembers Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego), Luis Alejo (D-Salinas), and Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento).

The California New Motor Voter Act, AB 1461, would register every eligible citizen who goes to a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office to get a driver’s license or renew one, potentially adding millions of new registered voters to California’s voter rolls. The proposed law now heads back to the State Assembly for a final vote to concur on amendments taken in the State Senate.

“We must take action to change the status quo when more than 6.6 million Californians are eligible but not registered to vote,” Secretary Padilla said. “The New Motor Voter Act would make voter registration a more efficient, modern process for millions of California citizens. The New Motor Act would be a significant step in addressing the record low voter turnout for the 2014 General Election.”

“Citizens are currently forced to opt-in to their fundamental right to vote through registration,” Padilla added. “We do not have to opt-in to other rights. We do not have to opt-in to free speech or due process. The right to vote should be no different.”

Californian citizens who are identified as eligible voters when visiting the DMV to apply for, renew, or change their address on a driver’s license would be registered to vote by Secretary of State’s office.

Voters would retain their right to opt out or cancel their voter registration at any time, as well as change their party affiliation. The proposed law would continue to protect those covered by existing confidentiality policies, such as victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Registration has been a barrier to voting for millions of Californians. Approximately 6.6 million California citizens are eligible but not registered to vote. On Election Day last year more than 40,000 people logged on to the Secretary of State website trying to register to vote. Unfortunately it was too late.

Millions of Americans have been prevented from participating in elections because they are not registered to vote. A recent study using Google search data estimated that 3 million to 4 million Americans wanted to participate in the 2012 general election, but unfortunately could not vote because it was too late to register.

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