



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE ALEX PADILLA

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CONTACT: Sam Mahood

Office: (916) 653-6575

Cell: (916) 661-2633

California New Motor Voter Act Passed by Legislature

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

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.

“We must take action to improve the record low voter turnout in recent California elections,” Secretary Padilla said. “Democracy is stronger when more citizens can vote. Unfortunately, more than 6.6 million California citizens are eligible but unregistered to vote. The New Motor Voter Act would make voter registration a more efficient, modern process for millions of California citizens.”

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

California 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 the 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.

“Nothing is more fundamental to a strong democracy than ensuring people have access to voting free from unnecessary barriers,” said Assemblywoman Gonzalez. “We’ve seen turnout plummet in recent years as our voting system has fallen behind the times, but the New Motor Voter Act allows us the opportunity to streamline and modernize the registration process for millions of eligible voters who haven’t been a part of our voting system.”

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“AB 1461, the California New Motor Voter Act, aims to address California’s lack of voter turnout by making voter registration easier for eligible citizens that interact with the DMV, thereby increasing opportunities for those eligible citizens to participate in our democracy,” Assemblymember Alejo said. “We urge Governor Brown to sign this simple bill that embraces our right to vote by utilizing technology and ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to automatically be registered to vote.”

“I am proud to join my colleagues and Secretary of State Padilla on finding ways to increase civic engagement by breaking down barriers and increasing opportunities for voter participation,” Assemblymember McCarty said.

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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