



# DEBRA BOWEN

## CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

### NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **As Vote-By-Mail Ballots Become Available For June Primary, Secretary of State Encourages California Voters to Check Their Voter Registration**

**SACRAMENTO** – Californians who vote by mail may start requesting their ballots and voting today for the June 3, 2008, Statewide Direct Primary Election, Secretary of State Debra Bowen announced.

The number of people voting by mail (formerly known as “absentee voting”) has steadily moved upward over the last decade. During the last statewide election in February, nearly 41.7% of the 9.1 million Californians who voted cast ballots by mail rather than at polling places. Six years earlier, in the 2000 Primary Election, about 23% of Californians voted by mail.

“More and more Californians are finding voting by mail to be a convenient way to take part in their democracy,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “People who vote by mail can cast their ballots anytime between now and Election Day. It’s important to note that vote-by-mail ballots must be received at any polling place in the county where a voter is registered to vote by the 8:00 p.m. close of polls on June 3.”

California has one of the nation’s most user-friendly vote-by-mail programs. Since 1978, every registered California voter has been allowed to cast a ballot by mail. A 2001 law made it possible for any Californian to register as a permanent vote-by-mail voter, meaning their ballots are automatically mailed to them every election.

The deadline to register to vote in the June 3 primary is May 19, meaning now is also a good time for voters to check with their county elections officials to make sure their voter registration information – including their political party affiliation – is correct. In the February presidential primary, there were scattered reports of people showing up at the polls and learning that they weren’t registered as they thought they were.

“Some voters who thought they were registered with a party found their registration listed as nonpartisan or ‘decline to state,’ and some people who thought they were ‘decline to state’ voters were registered as members of the American Independent Party,” Bowen said. “I encourage everyone to check their registration information with their county now to ensure they will receive the ballots they want on Election Day.”

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**DB08:054**  
**May 5, 2008**  
**Page 2**

County elections officials may begin mailing out ballots to permanent vote-by-mail voters today, which is 29 days before the primary. An estimated four million Californians are registered as permanent vote-by-mail voters, and thousands more sign up to vote by mail on a one-time basis in each election cycle.

A list of county elections offices is available at [http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections\\_d.htm](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_d.htm).

Registering to vote is simple and free. Registration forms are available at most post offices, public libraries, city and county offices, the Secretary of State's offices, and online at [http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections\\_vr.htm](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_vr.htm).

To register to vote in California, a person must be a U.S. citizen, a California resident, and at least 18 years old by Election Day. People who are in prison or on parole for a felony conviction, and people who have been judged by a court to be mentally incompetent, are not eligible to vote in California.

The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot for the June primary is May 27. County elections officials began mailing ballots to military and overseas voters April 4.

For more information about voting by mail, or to download an application for a vote-by-mail ballot, go to [http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections\\_m.htm](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_m.htm).

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