



DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen Welcomes Creation of Online Voter Registration System

SACRAMENTO – Soon registering to vote will be as easy as a few keystrokes, thanks to Senate Bill 381 (Calderon), which the Governor signed today. The measure will usher in the era of online voter registration in California.

“Californians can pay bills and file their taxes online. Being able to register to vote online is the next logical step in making it easier for Californians to participate fully in their democracy,” said Secretary of State Debra Bowen, California’s chief elections officer. “This measure prevents fraud by limiting online voter registration to people who confirm their identity in a secure manner.”

The online registration system will require registrants to provide their birth dates, the last four digits of their Social Security numbers, and the numbers from either a valid California driver’s license or identification card. The Secretary of State may require additional information if it’s necessary to establish a registrant’s identity.

Registrants will be able to complete voter registration online using their digitized signatures that are already on file with the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

Currently in California, all voter registrations use paper affidavits. It is now possible for voters to complete federal voter registration cards online, but they must still be printed and signed before being mailed to elections officials. Elections officials need to have copies of voters’ signatures in order to verify vote-by-mail ballots and petitions for initiatives, recalls, and referenda.

SB 381 will take effect once the state’s new voter registration database, VoteCal, is up and running, likely in 2010. Since 2002, the state of Arizona has allowed most eligible residents to register to vote online. Washington state began offering online voter registration in January.

The last day for eligible Californians to register to vote in the November 4, 2008, General Election is October 20. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is October 28.

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