



DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Bowen Reminds Californians Of Election Dos and Don'ts

SACRAMENTO – With 18 days left until the November 4 election, Secretary of State Debra Bowen today reminded voters of their key rights and responsibilities under California law.

“Knowing your voting rights is just as important as studying up on the candidates and issues,” said Secretary Bowen, California’s chief elections officer. “The more knowledgeable voters and elections officials are about voting rights, the smoother Election Day will be for everyone.”

The Secretary of State mailed her Official Voter Information Guide and a Supplemental Official Voter Information Guide, which include a Voter Bill of Rights and other helpful voter information, to every voting household in California. They also are available in audio and print versions. “Sample ballot” booklets, mailed to voters by county elections offices, offer more information about local candidates and measures.

Secretary Bowen also has a toll-free Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE. Voters may call the Secretary of State’s Voter Hotline any time between now and election night to ask election-related questions or to report potential election fraud or voter intimidation.

A list of key election dos and don'ts is attached.

The last day to register to vote for the General Election is October 20. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is October 28.

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Election Dos and Don'ts

DO: Register to vote, or double-check your registration, by October 20, if you want to vote in the November 4 election. Voter registration cards are available at libraries, U.S. Post Offices, county elections offices, and California Department of Motor Vehicles offices, or you can print one from the Secretary of State's website.

If you want to double-check your registration or confirm the accuracy of your information (such as address and political party choice), call your county elections office.

DON'T: Offer incentives to voters for agreeing to register to vote or to vote. This is illegal under state and federal law.

DO: Know that you may still vote even if you have left your home because of a foreclosure. If you have not formed a new permanent residence, you may vote where you were previously registered.

DON'T: Campaign for votes, solicit petition signatures, or wear campaign materials within 100 feet of a polling place. Electioneering in the immediate area around polling places is illegal in California. More information on this subject is available at

DO: Choose whether to vote at a polling place or vote by mail, and vote by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Any California voter can vote by mail (formerly known as absentee voting). The deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot from your county elections office is October 28.

If you prefer the in-person experience, polls will be open between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on November 4. If you are in line when the polls close, you will be allowed to vote. If you would rather vote by mail, remember that those ballots also must be turned in by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day at a polling place in your county or at your county elections office. Postmarks do not count for ballots.

DON'T: Sit on the sidelines during this important election. Consider other ways to get involved in your democracy. Be a poll worker and help make Election Day run smoother for everyone. Host a ballot study group with your neighbors or family. Volunteer for a campaign you believe in, and encourage others to vote.

DO: Know your voting rights and your polling place. If, for any reason, your name is not on the list at your polling place, you have the right to cast a provisional ballot. The provisional ballot will be counted after your county elections office has confirmed that you are registered to vote in your county and you did not already vote elsewhere in that election. If you don't know where your polling place is, or if you have any concerns about your election experience, call your county elections office or the Secretary of State's Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE.

Ask a poll worker for assistance if you don't understand your voting system. And if you make a mistake on your ballot, ask a poll worker for a new ballot.