



DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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June Primary Voting Begins Today, Secretary of State Encourages Voters to Check Registration

SACRAMENTO – Although the June 8 Statewide Direct Primary Election is 29 days away, voting actually begins today as county elections officials begin mailing ballots to millions of Californians who opt to vote by mail.

Vote-by-mail voting is an increasingly popular choice for Californians. In the May 19, 2009, Statewide Special Election, a record 62 percent of voters cast their ballots by mail. The previous record was set in June 2008 when more than 58 percent of voters voted by mail.

“Voting by mail gives you the flexibility to vote when it is convenient for you,” said Secretary of State Debra Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “You can cast your vote-by-mail ballot now, or mark it as you make up your mind on an issue or candidate. Just make sure your county elections official receives your ballot by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day so it will be counted.”

Any California voter may vote using a vote-by-mail ballot instead of going to the polls on Election Day. Prior to 1978, only people who had a certified medical excuse or planned to be out of town on Election Day were allowed to vote through the mail. Additionally, as a result of a 2001 law, any registered voter may choose to become a permanent vote-by-mail voter.

More than 5.8 million Californians are registered as permanent vote-by-mail voters. Thousands more people choose to cast their ballots through the mail on a one-time basis each election.

Vote-by-mail ballots may be mailed or dropped off at any polling place within the voter’s county. Once county elections officials determine that the signature on the vote-by-mail ballot return envelope matches the voter’s signature on his or her voter registration card and the voter did not vote elsewhere in the same election, the ballot and the envelope are separated and the ballot is counted.

The deadline to register to vote in the June 8 primary is two weeks from today, on May 24. To eliminate any surprises on or before Election Day, voters may check with their county elections officials to ensure their registration information is correct. For example, sometimes voters think they are registered with a party and find their registration listed as nonpartisan or decline-to-state (DTS). In prior years, some people who thought they were registered as DTS had actually registered as members of the American Independent Party.

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Under California's "modified closed primary" system, voters may only vote the ballot of their particular party but each political party may choose to allow DTS voters to request its ballots. In the June 8 primary, the Democratic and Republican parties will permit DTS voters to vote in their primaries; the other four qualified parties will not.

The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is June 1. California voters may request a vote-by-mail ballot by either using the application printed on the back of the sample ballot booklet mailed by county elections officials, or obtain an application online at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/vote-by-mail/pdf/fill-in-vote-by-mail-app-instruct.pdf. All ballots, whether vote-by-mail or other, must be received by county elections officials by 8:00 p.m. on June 8. (Postmarks do not count.)

A list of the county offices is available at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_d.htm.

To sign up for regular election updates via email, RSS feed or Twitter, go to www.sos.ca.gov/multimedia.

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