



DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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Statewide Voting Begins Today

SACRAMENTO – As county elections officials begin mailing November 2 General Election ballots to millions of Californians who opt to vote by mail, Secretary of State Debra Bowen also encouraged all voters to check their registration information to make sure it is correct.

Starting today, vote-by-mail voters can cast their November 2 ballots through the mail or vote in person at county elections offices.

“When you vote by mail, your mailbox is your polling place,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “As more and more Californians opt for the ease and convenience of voting by mail, Election Day has really turned into Election Month.”

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.

Voting by mail is becoming an increasingly popular choice for Californians. Ballots cast by mail comprised 57.9 percent of the total votes cast in the June 8 primary. In the May 19, 2009, Statewide Special Election, a record 62 percent of voters cast their ballots by mail.

More than six million Californians are registered as permanent vote-by-mail voters. Hundreds of thousands more voters 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 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.

“As a vote-by-mail voter, you can vote and mail your ballot now, or mark it as you make up your mind on an issue or a candidate,” added Bowen. “Whatever you do, make sure your county elections official receives your ballot by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day so it will be counted.”

The deadline to register to vote in the November 2 General Election is October 18. To eliminate

– MORE –

DB10:104
October 4, 2010
Page 2

any surprises on or before Election Day, voters can check their voter registration status by using a new feature on the Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/registration-status/index.htm. There, voters can access county-specific websites and phone numbers dedicated to registration verification.

The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is October 26. A California voter 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 November 2. (Postmarks do not count.)

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