



# DEBRA BOWEN

## CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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### **Secretary of State Bowen Secures Greater Public Access to Historic Voter Records**

**SACRAMENTO** – Historians, researchers, and people exploring genealogy will have an important new window to the past thanks to a new law sponsored by Secretary of State Debra Bowen and approved by the Governor today.

Senate Bill 112, authored by Senator Bill Monning, allows California voter rolls to be available to the public after 100 years. Currently, state law prohibits making any voter registration records available to the general public at any time. Personal identifiers such as social security and driver license numbers were not used in voter registration until 1994, and waiting 100 years to open these records ensures that no living individual's information will be vulnerable to identity theft.

“No matter how old voter registration records are, state law really limits who can look at these historical treasures,” said Secretary Bowen, California's chief elections official. “Most often, people want access to old voter rolls to study their family history, so this bill makes that possible while protecting the privacy of current voters.”

Maintained by county elections officials, voter registration records contain valuable historical information such as the date of birth, address, occupation, and in some cases the country of origin, and physical characteristics of each voter such as height, hair color, and distinguishing marks.

U.S. Census records contain information similar to California's historic voter rolls and are sealed for 72 years before being released to the public by the National Archives and Records Administration.

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