



NEWS RELEASE

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California Legislature Sends Landmark Election Reform Bill To Governor Brown

SACRAMENTO – Legislation that would provide Californians more options for when, where, and how they cast a ballot won final legislative approval today in the State Senate. SB 450, sponsored by California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, was jointly authored by Senators Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica) and Bob Hertzberg (D-Van Nuys). The legislation now heads to Governor Brown for his consideration.

“I commend Senator Allen and Senator Hertzberg for their commitment and tireless work on this important legislation, and I thank the legislators who voted for this measure,” Padilla said.

“We are one step away from modernizing California elections. With his signature, Governor Brown can provide California voters more options for when, where, and how they vote. If we are truly committed to increasing voter turnout and participation we must make voting more convenient for California voters. SB 450 does that,” added Padilla.

Padilla has put the full weight of his office into election reform and SB 450 is a key agenda item. Last year the Governor approved AB 1461, a Padilla sponsored bill that will establish automatic voter registration in the Golden State. When fully deployed that measure is likely to enfranchise millions of Californians who currently are not registered to vote.

"Automatic registration, relentless voter outreach and providing more options for when, where and how we vote is our recipe for record breaking voter participation and turnout," Padilla said.

“Why limit voters to one location on one Tuesday? For many working Californians it may make more sense to cast a ballot the week before Election Day at a location closer to where they work, or where they drop off their kids, or at the local recreation center,” Padilla explained.

SB 450 empowers California voters by allowing them to cast a ballot in-person during the 10 days leading up to an election at any vote center in their county. Under SB 450, a vote-by-mail ballot would automatically be sent to every registered voter 28 days before Election Day.

"Let's put a ballot in the hand of every registered voter and provide more options for when, where, and how they cast their ballot," Padilla added.

Key elements of SB 450

Vote-by-Mail Ballots

When fully deployed, every registered voter would be delivered a ballot 28 days before Election Day.

Voters would be able to vote in-person at a vote center, mail their ballot in, drop it off at a vote center or at a ballot drop-off location.

Vote Centers

Polling places would ultimately be replaced by vote centers. Voters would have the freedom to cast a ballot at any vote center in their county instead of being tied to a single polling location. Vote centers look and feel like polling places, but provide additional benefits and options for voters.

At a vote center, a voter may:

Cast a ballot in-person

Drop-off their ballot

Access same-day voter registration

Receive a replacement ballot

Use accessible voting machines

Access language assistance and translated materials

There would be one vote center for every 10,000 registered voters on Election Day and the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday leading up to Election Day. Starting 10 days before the Election and through the Friday before Election Day, there would be one vote center for every 50,000 registered voters.

“Vote centers not only provide flexibility to voters, they also serve as trouble shooting hubs for voters that are open 10 days before Election Day. Vote centers also preserve the in-person voting experience for those that still want to cast their ballot at the polls,” Padilla added.

Ballot Drop-Off Locations

Ballot drop-off locations provide voters with an additional way to return their ballot.

Starting 28 days before Election Day there would be at least one drop-off location for every 15,000 registered voters.

Drop-off locations must be secure, accessible to voters with disabilities, and located as near as possible to public transportation routes.

Voter Education and Public Process for Adopting Vote Center Plans

Every county that adopts the SB 450 reforms would be required to draft and adopt a detailed plan through an open, public process.

Counties would be required to hold education workshops with community groups, including organizations that assist voters with disabilities and language minority communities.

Timeline for Implementation

SB 450 changes would begin in 2018, and allow Calaveras, Inyo, Madera, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Shasta, Sierra, Sutter, and Tuolumne counties to implement the new election model. All other counties would be allowed to adopt SB 450 reforms in 2020.

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