



NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Brown Signs Landmark Election Reform Bill

SACRAMENTO – Governor Jerry Brown has signed Senate Bill 450 which will modernize California elections. 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).

“I commend Senator Allen and Senator Hertzberg for their work in carrying this legislation to improve the voting experience. I thank Governor Brown for signing SB 450. Once again he has demonstrated his vision and leadership,” Padilla said.

“This landmark law will provide voters more options for when, where, and how they cast a ballot,” Secretary of State Padilla said. “SB 450 will increase civic participation and make our democracy stronger.”

“Under the new election model, which will be phased in beginning in 2018, registered voters would automatically be sent a ballot 28 days before the election. Voters could return their ballot by mail, take it to a drop-off location, or cast it in-person at any vote center in their county. SB 450 will also empower California voters with a major expansion of early voting. Vote centers will preserve the in-person voting experience and provide flexibility to voters, allowing them to cast a ballot at locations throughout their county. Vote centers also serve as trouble shooting hubs for voters that are open 10 days before Election Day,” Padilla added.

“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 where they go to college,” Padilla explained. “Why limit voting to one location on a single Tuesday?”

The Governor’s action is a major victory for Secretary of State Alex Padilla and his office, which in a span of less than two years have not only won passage of SB 450, but also a new law that establishes automatic voter registration in the golden state. In addition, the Governor today also approved SB 1349 which is key to rebuilding and modernizing CAL-ACCESS, California’s campaign finance database, another Padilla priority. Combined, these three measures will dramatically transform California voter registration, elections, and transparency of campaign finance data.

“Our current system of limiting voters to casting their ballot at a single location on a single day has failed, as our voter turnout rates have continued to decline toward record lows,” Senator Ben Allen said. “People lead increasingly complicated lives; we should provide them with maximum flexibility when it comes to voting. Under this new law, people will be able to choose the time and place to vote that is most convenient for their lifestyle and their schedule. This is part of an effort to modernize our voting system to meet contemporary needs.”

“I am glad the governor has signed SB 450 because it is time for us to modernize the voting process and provide Californians the same convenience and flexibility in casting a ballot as they have in so many other areas of their lives,” Senator Hertzberg said. “You can stream a movie over the internet or deposit a check with your phone at any time, but without this bill, many people still have to rearrange their busy schedules to get to a polling place on a single day and that has hurt turnout.”

“Under the provisions of this new law, state and local government are now well positioned to develop a modernized voting experience and a more efficient model of election administration in California,” said Dean Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk and president of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials.

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.

For example, 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.

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

The new voting options 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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