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Bill to Move Up California's Presidential Primary Clears First Legislative Committee

Prime Time Primary (Senate Bill 568) will ensure California voters' voice is heard in 2020

SACRAMENTO, CA – Legislation sponsored by California Secretary of State Alex Padilla and authored by State Senator Ricardo Lara (D-Bell Gardens) to give California voters an earlier say in the Presidential Primary process was passed by the State Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments today. SB 568 received bipartisan support, passing 5-0.

“Too often California votes too late to impact and influence the presidential nominating process,” Secretary of State Alex Padilla said. “Too often California is relegated to serving as the nation’s political ATM. California is the largest and most diverse state in the nation and we deserve our commensurate voice in the nomination of presidential candidates. SB 568 gives power to the California voters by putting our Presidential primary in prime time.”

“California is first in the nation when it comes to our economy, our population and our innovations, but we’re dead last in the presidential primary calendar. It’s time for Californians to have a louder voice about who is going to lead our country,” said Senator Lara.

California voters have a unique stake in shaping the national discourse and the selection of presidential nominees. 19.4 million Californians are registered to vote, far exceeding every other state in the nation.

In 2008, California moved up its Presidential Primary to February resulting in the highest voter turnout since 1980. The goal of Senate Bill 568 is to move California’s presidential primary election to third after Iowa and New Hampshire. Specifically, SB 568 calls for the California presidential primary to be held on the third Tuesday in March and authorizes the Governor to move it even earlier if other states move up their primary elections.

SB 568 would also move up primary elections in statewide office and legislative races, eliminating potential voter confusion from multiple election dates. An earlier presidential primary in 2020 will help engage new voters from the top of the ticket down to state legislative races.

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