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California State Assembly Approves Voting Modernization Bond Act of 2018

Bond Seeks \$450 Million to Update Aging Voting Systems

SACRAMENTO, CA – Assembly Bill 668, the Voting Modernization Bond Act of 2018 was approved by the California State Assembly today. The legislation, sponsored by California Secretary of State Alex Padilla and authored by Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher (D-San Diego), seeks a \$450 million bond to update aging equipment and improve California’s voting systems. AB 668 cleared the 2/3 vote threshold for proposed bonds, passing on a bipartisan 54-17 vote.

“The need to replace our voting systems is not a new issue, nor is it a partisan issue,” Secretary of State Padilla said. “Many counties are grappling with voting equipment that is perilously near its life expectancy. We have a responsibility and a duty to modernize our voting equipment for future elections. An investment in modern voting systems will help protect the integrity of our elections and better serve voters. California counties alone cannot bear the financial burden of purchasing the new systems. And we cannot afford to wait for funding from the federal government. Today’s bipartisan vote by the State Assembly to approve AB 668 is a big step towards securing the funding needed to ensure that our elections are reliable and secure.”

“The right to vote is our most important right. But local election officials have to rely on equipment that is rapidly becoming outdated or obsolete. County election officials, especially in smaller and rural counties, need help in upgrading their voting systems and implementing best practices like expanded early voting and vote centers,” Assemblywoman Gonzalez Fletcher said. “This is a modest investment in the health of our democracy.”

"We are on the threshold of delivering a more secure, transparent and accessible voting experience in California -- one that positions us as leaders in the country -- but we need the infrastructure in place to fully realize the benefits of election policies passed in recent years. AB 668 provides the support needed to ensure that happens," said Dean Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk and President of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials.

[Video: Secretary Padilla, Assemblymember Gonzalez Fletcher, and county elections officials call on support for Voting Modernization Bond Act.](#)

[2015 Mercury News Op-Ed: Secretary Padilla and Orange County Registrar Neal Kelley: California's obsolete voting systems need replacing](#)

In [a report published in March](#), the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) recommends that the legislature consider one-time funding to replace aging voting systems. Specifically, the LAO wrote, "In one example, a county's system had a failed part that no longer is supported by the manufacturer or easy to replace. The county purchased a replacement part through eBay. In another example, a county uses the same system it used in the 1990s. Although this county's system has been updated periodically, it currently relies on computers that operate on Microsoft Windows XP—an operating system that was released in 2001 and no longer receives free security upgrades or other support from the manufacturer. Both of these examples raise serious concerns about the security of the voting system as well as the possibility of a catastrophic failure of voting systems in counties."

The last major investment in California elections systems came through the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 and Proposition 41, the Voting Modernization Bond Act of 2002. Each appropriated \$252 million and \$200 million respectively. These funds were provided to counties as a reimbursement on a 3:1 matching basis, requiring counties to directly pay for 25% of their new voting systems.

In September of 2015, New York University's Brennan Center for Justice [issued a report](#) that raised concerns including the failure of equipment to work as intended and the difficulty of finding replacement parts for machines that are no longer manufactured.

"The problem of aging voting technology is national and widespread. We ignore it at our collective peril," said Lawrence Norden, Deputy Director of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law. "With this bill, California proposes to lead the country with a comprehensive modernization, which will improve accessibility, security, and reliability of our state's elections."

In 2014, President Obama's Commission on Election Administration issued a report that included this passage: "Perhaps the direst warning the Commission heard in its investigation concerned the impending crisis in voting technology. Well-known to election administrators, if not the public at large, this impending crisis arises from the widespread wearing out of voting machines purchased a decade ago ..."

AB 668 will also fund innovations in voting access for Californians. Funding would enhance early voting options, same-day voter registration, vote centers, language access, disability access and cyber security.

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