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Sacramento County Adopts Major Election Reforms Enabled by the Voters Choice Act

SACRAMENTO, CA – The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors today voted to adopt the election model created by the Voters Choice Act. Beginning in 2018, all registered voters in Sacramento County will automatically be sent a ballot 28 days prior to Election Day. Voters will be able to return their ballot by mail, take it to a drop-off location, or cast it in-person at any vote center in the county.

The Voters Choice Act (SB 450), sponsored by California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, is a landmark election reform measure signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown in 2016.

“I applaud Sacramento County for choosing to modernize their elections and giving voters more options for when, where and how they cast a ballot,” Secretary of State Padilla said. “The Board of Supervisors’ decision will increase voter participation by making voting more convenient and accessible. I look forward to working with county officials to ensure a smooth transition.”

“I am very excited for Sacramento County voters to have expanded voting opportunities through the California’s Voter Choice Act,” Sacramento County Registrar of Voters Jill LaVine said. “All voters will be receiving a ballot and with Vote Centers, voters can drop off their ballot or vote at a location and time that is convenient for them.”

Key elements of the Voters Choice Act (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 will be at least 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 at least 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

14 counties are allowed to adopt the SB 450 elections model for 2018: 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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