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California Secretary of State Alex Padilla Calls on Orange County Board of Supervisors to Reconsider Voter's Choice Act

SACRAMENTO – California Secretary of State Alex Padilla sent a letter to the Orange County Board of Supervisors requesting that they reconsider their decision to reject the reforms contained in the [California Voter's Choice Act](#). Sacramento and Nevada Counties have already adopted the Voter's Choice Act.

“These proven election reforms would provide voters greater options in when, where, and how they cast a ballot and save taxpayers money,” Padilla said. “The Orange County Board of Supervisors’ decision to not even allow a public discussion of this plan seems driven less by the interests of the people of Orange County and more by political considerations.”

The Voter's Choice Act (SB 450), sponsored by Secretary of State Padilla, is a landmark election reform measure signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown in 2016. Counties adopting the Voter's Choice Act would automatically send every voter a ballot 28 days prior to Election Day. Voters would 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.

“As public servants entrusted to serve in government, we have a responsibility to actively strengthen our democracy by providing real solutions that can help increase voter registration, participation and access to the polls. Increasing civic participation will not be solved by merely continuing to lament the dismal turnout in many of our elections.”

“Misguided concerns about voter fraud were raised as a reason to not adopt the Voter's Choice Act elections model,” Padilla added. “However, Orange County's own Grand Jury concluded earlier this year that, “There is no evidence of widespread or organized voter fraud or voter interference” and further found that the California Voter's Choice Act “will promote voter turnout, provide longer timeframes for ballot casting, maintain the security of the voting process, and preserve election integrity in the years ahead.”

[No Voter Fraud Here: The Transparent Election Process, Orange County Grand Jury, March 13, 2017](#)

“The Board’s inaction also ignores the cost-saving benefits of the proposal—it would save Orange County taxpayers as much as \$10 million—money that could be put to use for other essential county services,” Padilla said. “A disheartening result of the Board’s inaction is also that it signals an unwillingness to even attempt to address the perennial need to engage our electorate and increase voter participation in our democracy.”

The full text of Secretary Padilla’s letter to the Orange County Board of Supervisors can be found below:

Michelle Steel, Chairwoman
Andrew Do, Vice Chair
Todd Spitzer, Member
Shawn Nelson, Member
Lisa A. Bartlett, Member
Orange County Board of Supervisors
Hall of Administration
333 W. Santa Ana Boulevard
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Supervisors:

I write to urge the Orange County Board of Supervisors to reconsider your action of June 13, 2017 and vote to adopt the California Voter’s Choice Act proposal submitted to you by Orange County Registrar of Voters Neal Kelley. Mr. Kelley’s proposal would implement important election reforms to increase citizen participation, strengthen election integrity, and save taxpayer dollars.

The failure of the Board to allow a public discussion of these proven reforms is particularly concerning.

In rejecting these reforms, Supervisor Todd Spitzer cited concern about potential “voter fraud.” The board of supervisors should be aware that allegations of massive voter fraud have been repeatedly rejected by state and local election officials of all political parties, as well as academic studies.

Contrary to Supervisor Spitzer’s claims, Orange County’s own Grand Jury concluded earlier this year that, “There is no evidence of widespread or organized voter fraud or voter interference” and further found that the California Voter’s Choice Act “will promote voter turnout, provide longer timeframes for ballot casting, maintain the security of the voting process, and preserve election integrity in the years ahead.” (No Voter Fraud Here: The Transparent Election Process, Orange County Grand Jury, March 13, 2017)

The Board’s inaction also ignores the cost-saving benefits of the proposal—it would save Orange County taxpayers as much as \$10 million—money that could be put to use for other essential county services. A disheartening result of the Board’s inaction is also that it signals an



unwillingness to even attempt to address the perennial need to engage our electorate and increase voter participation in our democracy.

Your failure to allow public comment, to consider your own County's Grand Jury's conclusions, or support your County Registrar's efforts to better serve the citizens of Orange County suggests that something else is at play here. I am very concerned that your action was driven less by the interests of the people of Orange County and more by political considerations.

As Secretary of State it is my responsibility to do everything in my power to increase voter participation across all parts of our great state of California. I cannot do this alone. Such an effort requires legitimate and dedicated partners in each and every county who are committed to the fundamental tenants of our democratic form of government. Increasing civic participation will not be solved by simply continuing to lament the dismal turnout in many of our elections. Instead, we, as public servants entrusted to serve in government have a responsibility to proactively strengthen our democracy by providing real solutions that can help increase voter registration, participation and access to the polls.

The California Voter's Choice Act will empower all voters, including your constituents, to become more engaged in our government. I urge you to allow for a full discussion on the matter, and to adopt Mr. Kelley's Voter's Choice Act proposal.

Sincerely,

ALEX PADILLA
California Secretary of State

cc: Dean Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk and President of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials

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