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Governor Brown Signs Prime Time Primary Act to Move up California's Primary

SACRAMENTO – Governor Brown has approved a plan to move California's primary election from one of the last, to one of the first in the nation. Senate Bill 568, The Prime Time Primary Act received bipartisan support in the State Legislature.

The Prime Time Primary Act moves the statewide primary to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March for presidential and non-presidential election years. The California primary has traditionally been held in June, at the tail end of the presidential primary schedule. The late timing dilutes California's impact and influence in the Presidential Primary nomination process. Last year only the District of Columbia held a primary election after California.

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.

"The Golden State will no longer be relegated to last place in the presidential nominating process," Secretary of State Padilla said. "California's primary will officially be in prime time. Candidates will not be able to ignore the largest, most diverse state in the nation as they seek our country's highest office. California has been a leader time and time again on the most important issues facing our country—including immigration, education, and the environment. The Prime Time Primary Act will help ensure that issues important to Californians are prioritized by presidential candidates from all political parties.

"The Prime Time Primary puts California voters in the front seat in choosing our next president and will change our elections for the better," Senator Ricardo Lara said. "We have a responsibility to drive a different agenda at the national level and promote inclusion and consensus not the politics of division."

"Governor Brown's signature on SB 568 gives all Californians a more powerful voice in presidential primary elections," said the bill's Principal Co-Author, Assembly Speaker pro Tem Kevin Mullin. "Given California is the sixth largest economy in the world, that one out of every eight U.S. voters lives in California, and that we have one of the largest and most diverse

populations in America, it is only right that our primary election date makes “California Count” when choosing our presidential candidates.”

In 2008, California moved up its Presidential Primary to February resulting in the highest voter turnout for a primary election since 1980. The goal of Senate Bill 568 is to put California’s presidential primary election in the top tier of states after Iowa and New Hampshire.

Senate Bill 568 also consolidates the state and presidential primary votes and moves up the primary election to March in non-presidential years to boost voter engagement, reduce costs for local elections and limit voter confusion.

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