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Two New Remote Access Vote-by-Mail Systems Approved by California Secretary of State

SACRAMENTO – Secretary of State Alex Padilla has certified two new remote accessible vote-by-mail systems for use in California elections. California is the first state to certify these types of systems, which provide an accessible option for citizens with disabilities to mark their vote-by-mail ballots privately and independently.

"I'm proud that California is on the forefront of making elections more accessible for voters with disabilities," Secretary of State Padilla said. "Voters have a fundamental right to cast a secret ballot; unfortunately this can be difficult for some voters with disabilities. These new systems will allow voters with disabilities to receive their ballots at home and mark them independently and privately before sending them back to elections officials."

Voters with disabilities have unique challenges accessing the convenience of vote-by-mail. Voters with visual or physical impairments often rely on others to assist them in reading and marking their ballot. Remote accessible vote-by-mail systems allow voters with disabilities to mark an electronic vote-by-mail ballot independently at home. Their ballot would then need to be printed and mailed to a county elections official or returned to a polling place.

"Both of the remote accessible vote-by-mail systems will allow voters with disabilities to vote by mail as privately and independently as possible," said Fred Nisen, Attorney for Voting Rights at Disability Rights California.

Democracy Live and Five Cedars received certification for their remote accessible vote-by-mail systems to be used in California on Wednesday.

California has one of the most strenuous testing and certification programs in the country. New voting systems applying for certification in California go through months of testing, including functional testing, source code review, red team security testing that involves experts trying to "break into" the voting system, and accessibility and volume testing as well.

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