



AP19:015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 22, 2019

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Secretary of State Alex Padilla Sponsors Legislation to Modernize the California Filing Process for Candidates for President of the United States

SACRAMENTO - California Secretary of State Alex Padilla is sponsoring legislation—authored by Senator Tom Umberg—to update the filing requirements for Presidential candidates seeking to compete in California’s primary election.

“California voters deserve to have candidates for President — of all parties — take California issues seriously,” Secretary of State Alex Padilla said. “With our primary election now scheduled for March, the most populous state in the nation will play a major role in the presidential nominating process. The next step in strengthening the process is to update the filing requirements for candidates. The filing process for candidates for President should be clear, transparent, and demonstrate that candidates are serious about earning the support of California voters.”

“2016 saw a record number of candidates running for President of the United States, and that looks to be repeated heading into the 2020 Presidential Election,” said Senator Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana). “California’s influence on national politics is undeniable. I’m glad to be authoring the bill to ensure that our taxpayer resources are focused on the candidates who are serious about leading. Voting should be a simple and transparent process and SB 505 will ensure that occurs moving forward.”

Under current law, the Secretary of State places on the ballot the names of candidates for President if they are ‘generally recognized’ as running. Currently, candidates are not even required to submit documentation or file formal paperwork with the Secretary of State’s office to appear on the California primary ballot.

SB 505 would define criteria that candidates must meet in order to qualify as being ‘generally recognized’ for a presidential nomination. Candidates would have to submit specified documentation to the Secretary of State’s office demonstrating they meet two of the following criteria:

- Qualified for funding under the Federal Election Campaign Act
- Qualified or been placed on another state’s presidential primary or caucus ballot

- Qualified for or has appeared in another state's caucuses
- Appeared in a national presidential debate
- Has all of the following: a campaign office in California, a campaign website, a statement of candidacy filed with the Federal Election Commission, and a written request to appear on the California ballot submitted on the candidate's behalf by a qualified political party.

Candidates would have to meet the criteria to be a 'generally recognized' candidate for president each election cycle. Qualifying as 'generally recognized' in 2020 would not guarantee that a candidate would make it on the ballot in 2024, for example. SB 505 is urgency legislation, so if passed it would take effect for the 2020 Presidential Primary.

Under SB 505 the Secretary of State must announce the candidates who met the 'generally recognized' criteria 88 days prior to the primary election date.

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