NEWS RELEASE
CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE KEVIN SHELLEY

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SECRETARY OF STATE SHELLEY RELEASES BLUEPRINT FOR IMPLEMENTING ELECTION REFORMS IN CALIFORNIA

California set to receive between $160--$170 million in federal funds this calendar year

SAN FRANCISCO --- Secretary of State Kevin Shelley today unveiled a draft plan that, if implemented, would avoid the serious election mistakes like those seen in Florida in 2000 and 2002.

"California will not become another Florida on my watch," said Secretary of State Kevin Shelley. "In order for every vote to count, every vote must be accurately counted. And that means modernizing voting equipment, expanding information to voters and increasing the training of poll workers."

Shelley's "My Vote Counts: A California Blueprint for Voting in the 21st Century" is a comprehensive roadmap to restoring voter confidence and ensuring that all eligible citizens have the opportunity to vote. It delineates how California will implement the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). California is expected to receive between $160 -- $170 million in federal dollars this calendar year to offset some of the state's costs for implementing HAVA.

The plan released today is a preliminary draft. The public will have 30 days to review it and make additional comments and recommendations. The report can be found at the Secretary of State's website at: www.ss.ca.gov.

Once the 30-day period is complete, Secretary Shelley will submit a final plan to the Federal Election Assistance Commission. After the final plan is published in the Federal Register for 45 days, California will receive a down payment to begin implementation.

Key recommendations in this draft report include:

- ***Modernizing voting equipment:*** Punch-card voting machines to be replaced with touch screen or optical scan systems.

- ***Making all polling places accessible to individuals with disabilities and other special needs:*** HAVA requires that every polling place statewide have at least one touch screen voting device, so that voters with visual or physical limitations can vote independently and privately.

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- ***Expanding the information provided to voters:*** Voters will receive detailed information at their polling places and elsewhere regarding the voting process and their rights as voters.

- ***Increasing the education and training of election officials and poll workers:*** These individuals will receive standardized training so they are aware of state and federal laws and voters' rights.

Earlier in the year the newly-elected Secretary of State Kevin Shelley appointed a 24-member advisory committee, made up of a diverse cross-section of Californians, to assist him in drafting a plan for voting in the 21st Century. The Committee held five public hearings, in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Fresno and Sacramento.

"My Vote Counts" incorporates the ideas on how to make the voting process more secure and how to implement the requirements of HAVA in a state with more than 15 million registered voters.

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