



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE **BRUCE McPHERSON**

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Secretary of State Bruce McPherson Highlights Enhanced Resources for Voters with Disabilities on First Day to Vote in California's November 7, 2006 General Election

McPherson Visited Fresno High School to Encourage Young People to Get Involved in the Democratic Process and Attended an Early Voting Site at the Valley Center for the Blind

FRESNO, CA – Secretary of State Bruce McPherson announced that today is the first day voters in California can begin voting in the November 7, 2006 General Election. Secretary McPherson spent the day in Fresno and met with hundreds of students from the Fresno Unified School District to encourage youth voter participation and later in the afternoon visited with voters with disabilities at an early voting site to highlight accessible voting options for the upcoming election.

"One of my highest priorities is to encourage young adults to register to vote and participate on Election Day," said Secretary McPherson. "I applaud the students from Fresno Unified School District for taking the first step of getting involved and participating in the gubernatorial student mock election today."

John Marinovich, Fresno Unified School District's Assistant Superintendent of High Schools, described the event as the best kind of civics lesson. "When 18 to 25-year-olds stay away from the polls, they are giving up their chance to make a difference in government and giving up a chance to choose the leaders who make the rules we all have to live by."

Secretary McPherson also announced that local county elections offices are now open for registered voters to cast their ballots early for the November 7, 2006 General Election. Any registered voter may go to their county elections office and vote early. Contact information for each county is available on the Secretary of State's website: www.ss.ca.gov.

"It's simple to vote early. Any registered voter in California can apply and vote early if their application is received in the set timeframe," said Secretary McPherson. "My goal is to ensure voting is as accessible as possible for all voters, including those with disabilities. I want to stress that any voter, for any reason can take advantage of this service and vote early in the November 7, 2006 General Election."

Russell Hoeltzer, Executive Director of the Valley Center for the Blind said, "I have always had someone else help me vote. Now, I can vote on my own. It is a great feeling of independence."

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Secretary McPherson also reminded registered voters that the deadline to request an absentee ballot by mail for the November 7, 2006 General Election is October 31st. To receive an absentee ballot, any registered voter can fill out and return the application form printed on their Sample Ballot or apply in writing to their county elections official. If the voter chooses to send in a written request, they must include their name as indicated on their registration affidavit, residence, mailing address and date of the election. The written request must also be signed and dated.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requires that each polling place in California have at least one accessible voting machine for voters with disabilities to cast their ballot independently and privately starting with the 2006 elections. Since becoming Secretary of State, Secretary McPherson has partnered with Independent Living Centers throughout the state to assist and encourage individuals with disabilities to take part in the electoral process.

For more information about voter registration and voting, please visit the Secretary of State's web site at: www.ss.ca.gov, or call 1-800-345-VOTE (8683).