

DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Welcomes New Protections to Shield Voters from Identity Theft

SACRAMENTO – Secretary of State Debra Bowen today applauded the Governor’s signing of Senate Bill 768 (Corbett), which will protect voters’ privacy and help protect them from becoming victims of identity theft.

“Current law ensures officials don’t release sensitive voter identity data, but it doesn’t provide specific protections for the data before it reaches an elections office,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections official. “Since thousands of people register to vote through organized voter registration efforts every year, it makes sense to extend the privacy protections in law to cover the initial collection of personal data.”

SB 768 keeps private voters’ social security numbers, driver’s license numbers and California identity card numbers from the moment they hand their registration cards to a voter registration drive worker. County elections officials are already required to keep social security numbers, driver’s license numbers and California identity card numbers strictly confidential. However, current law does not address what happens to voter registration card information before it reaches county elections offices.

A longtime advocate of personal privacy protections, Secretary Bowen authored landmark identity theft prevention laws during her time in the California Legislature. Those laws make it more difficult for criminals to commit identity theft by banning businesses, schools, universities and government agencies from using social security numbers as public identifiers and requiring credit card numbers to be removed from receipts kept by merchants.

SB 768 becomes law January 1, 2008. The last day to register to vote in the February 5, 2008 Presidential Primary Election is January 22.

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