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CONSENT

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Bill No: SB 684  
Author: Umberg (D)  
Amended: 1/6/20  
Vote: 21

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SENATE ELECTIONS & C.A. COMMITTEE: 5-0, 1/7/20  
AYES: Umberg, Nielsen, Hertzberg, Leyva, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

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**SUBJECT:** Elections: voter information guides

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill reduces the number of copies of the state voter information guide (VIG) that must be mailed to specified individuals, libraries, and educational institutions.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to produce a state VIG which must contain specified information, including, but not limited to, arguments and rebuttals for and against each state ballot measure, and an analysis of each state ballot measure.
- 2) Requires that a state VIG be mailed to every postal address at which one or more persons are registered to vote as of the 29th day before a statewide election.
- 3) Requires the SOS to establish a process that allows a voter to choose to opt out of receiving the state VIG and receive it by electronic mail, as specified.

- 4) Requires the SOS, as soon as copies of the VIG and copies of the full text of state ballots measures are available, to immediately mail copies of the VIG as follows:
  - a) Five copies to each county elections official or registrar of voters.
  - b) Six copies to each city elections official.
  - c) Five copies to each Member of the Legislature.
  - d) Five copies to the proponents of each ballot measure.
  - e) Two copies to each public library and branch of each public library.
  - f) Twelve copies to each public high school and 25 copies to each public postsecondary educational institution.
  - g) Upon request, additional copies may be furnished to these persons and institutions.

This bill:

- 1) Reduces the number of copies of the state VIG that the SOS is required to mail to each county elections official, registrar of voters, city elections official, and Member of the Legislature, and to the proponents of each ballot measure from five or six to one.
- 2) Reduces the number of copies of the state VIG that the SOS is required to mail to each public high school and public postsecondary educational institution from 12 or 25, respectively, to five.
- 3) Maintains that upon request, additional copies may be furnished to these persons and institutions.

### **Background**

*State VIG costs.* Numerous factors go into determining the total cost for the SOS to prepare and mail the state VIG including, but not limited to, the size of the VIG (total number of pages required), the total number of copies required, translation costs, etc.

The state VIG for the November 8, 2016 General Election was a record-setting 224 pages and contained information on 17 statewide ballot measures. The total cost to the state for preparation and mailing was approximately \$15 million. The total cost for the state VIG in 2018 was approximately \$7.2 million for each statewide election.

### **Comments**

- 1) According to the author, SB 684 will save state resources and promote a more environmentally friendly default amount of paper state VIGs that are distributed to city and state officials and educational entities across the state. This bill adapts to the reality that many people search the Internet for elections information and less paper voter guides are likely required across the state.

While this bill reduces the required number to be sent to these people and entities it maintains the provision that upon request the SOS, may send additional copies. Therefore, entities that wish to have paper copies can still gain access and less copies of the VIG will simply be thrown away across the state. This bill reduces the default amount of guides that are distributed but still provides a mechanism for access to the paper state VIGs.

### **Related/Prior Legislation**

This bill is similar to provisions contained in the introduced version of SB 664 (Allen, 2019-20), which passed the Senate Elections & Constitutional Amendments Committee 4-0 and the Senate Floor 37-0 but was subsequently amended in the Assembly to address transportation issues.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No    Fiscal Com.: Yes    Local: No

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 1/21/20)

None received

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 1/21/20)

None received

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1/22/20 15:23:49

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