
CONSENT

Bill No: SB 729
Author: Glazer (D)
Introduced: 2/19/21
Vote: 21

SENATE ELECTIONS & C.A. COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/26/21
AYES: Glazer, Nielsen, Hertzberg, Leyva, Newman

SUBJECT: Elections: polling places

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill permits elections officials to provide polling places with more than 12 instruction cards.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires elections officials to provide each polling place with at least six, but not more than 12, instruction cards to guide voters in obtaining and marking their ballots.
- 2) Defines “polling place” as a location where a voter casts a ballot and includes the following terms, as applicable: poll, polling location, and vote center. Specifies that a polling place can serve more than one precinct.

This bill:

- 1) Removes the maximum limit of 12 instruction cards.
- 2) Makes technical, nonsubstantive changes.

Background

Polling Place Materials. In addition to instruction cards, current law requires elections officials to provide specific informational and administrative materials for each polling place. These are mandated materials from either the Secretary of State or a county elections official. Some of the materials sent to a polling place include an accessible copy of the voter list, an American flag, a ballot container, a sufficient number of cards on how to obtain information about a voter's polling place, name badges, ballots, facsimile copies of the ballot, translated materials for voters, a roster, and various notices relating to election and voting procedures.

Instruction Cards. Each instruction card is required to have specified instructions and provisions of the Elections Code related to obtaining and marking a voter's ballot. Provisions on the instruction card include Election Day procedures, issuing a ballot, instructions for marking and submitting a ballot, procedures following the closure of a polling place, and penal provisions related to electioneering, vandalism, and voting.

Why Limited at Twelve? The range of at least six and not more than 12 instruction cards was implemented in 1945 pursuant to AB 586 (Robertson, Chapter 580, Statutes of 1945). Previously, it was required that 12 instruction cards be sent to each precinct. Since 1945, while the range of six to 12 instruction cards has remained the same, the wording for where these instruction cards are sent was changed to "polling places" and includes polls, polling locations, and vote centers.

Comments

According to the author, SB 729 provides elections officials with the option of providing more than 12 instruction cards to polling places. With an increasing number of counties shifting from traditional polling places to vote centers, counties have larger voting locations that are open for multiple days before Election Day and can accommodate a higher number of voters. Depending on the county, a vote center could have more than 12 voting booths in a single location and information for voters should be readily available. Removing the limitation on the number of information cards for each polling place provides greater flexibility for elections officials and provides voters with additional information about election procedures.

Related/Prior Legislation

SB 696 (Umberg, 2019) would have removed the limitation of 12 instruction cards. SB 696 was amended in the Assembly to another elections-related subject, which was vetoed.

AB 586 (Robertson, Chapter 580, Statutes of 1945) required the county clerk to furnish each precinct with not less than six nor more than 12 instruction cards.

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

SUPPORT: (Verified 4/26/21)

None received

OPPOSITION: (Verified 4/26/21)

None received

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