GOVERNOR′S VETO
AB 1116 (Berman)
As Enrolled August 27, 2026
2/3 vote

SUMMARY

Permits a person who does not have a state identification card or driver′s license (DL) but is qualified to register to vote, beginning January 1, 2029, to register using California′s Online Voter Registration (COVR) system on the Secretary of State′s (SOS) internet website, and requires the SOS to develop a method to collect an electronic image of an applicant′s signature.

Senate Amendments

1) Require the SOS to develop a method to collect an electronic signature image from a person who registers to vote through COVR without their DL or state identification card, instead of requiring the SOS to develop a process to allow an applicant to electronically upload a digitized image of their signature through COVR.

2) Permit the SOS to prescribe technical, security, accessibility, quality, retention, and transmission standards necessary to implement the collection method described in 1).

3) Clarify that a person who registers to vote through COVR without their DL or state identification card shall have their information verified using the same federal and state verification process used for an affidavit of voter registration submitted on paper that contains the last four digits of the applicant′s social security number. Provides that verification does not require the SOS to establish a new interface with the Social Security Administration.

4) Require the bill′s provisions to become operative January 1, 2029.

Governor′s Veto Message

″This bill requires the Secretary of State to develop a method to allow voting-eligible individuals who do not have a California′s driver′s license or California identification card to register to vote electronically by January 1, 2029.

″While I support the author′s goal of removing unnecessary barriers for eligible voters to register to vote, this bill would result in one-time and ongoing costs in the millions of dollars not included in the 2026 Budget Act.

″In partnership with the Legislature this year, my administration has enacted a balanced budget that recognizes the challenging fiscal landscape our state faces while maintaining our commitment to working families and our most vulnerable communities. With significant fiscal pressures and the federal government′s hostile economic policies, it is vital that we remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications that are not included in the budget, such as this measure.″

COMMENTS

As part of a voter′s registration, elections officials need to obtain a copy of the voter′s signature for various elections-related purposes. In order to allow for online voter registration, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the SOS developed a process and infrastructure to transfer an electronic copy of a person′s signature from the DMV to the SOS and to a county′s election management system. For individuals who do not have a California DL or a state identification card, however, the infrastructure does not currently exist to obtain a signature electronically for that voter from a source other than the DMV. Accordingly, individuals who do not have either of those documents may use COVR to fill out a voter registration application, but then must print, sign, and return the form to their local elections official′s office by mail or in person. This bill requires the SOS to develop a process that allows a person to register to vote through COVR without their DL or state identification card by providing an electronic signature image as part of the COVR registration process.

The Senate amendments require the SOS to develop a method to collect an electronic signature image from a person who registers through COVR without their DL or state identification card instead of requiring the SOS to develop a process to allow an applicant to electronically upload a digitized image of their signature through COVR. Additionally, the amendments permit the SOS to prescribe technical, security, accessibility, quality, retention, and transmission standards necessary to implement the collection method and clarify the verification process and provide that verification does not require the SOS to establish a new interface with the Social Security Administration. Finally, the Senate amendments require the bill′s provisions to become operative January 1, 2029. This bill, as amended in the Senate, is consistent with prior Assembly actions.

According to the Author

″The National Voter Registration Act and California′s New Motor Voter program have been instrumental in closing voter registration gaps by making it easier for eligible voters to register or update their registration when completing a driver′s license and state identification card transaction. Similarly, our online voter registration system has simplified voter registration for Californians with a DMV-issued driver′s license or identification card. Nevertheless, there remains a voter registration gap of over 4 million Californians. AB 1116 would take the next step to assist eligible but unregistered Californians by removing an unnecessary barrier to using our online voter registration system. This change will make our voter registration process more cost-effective and efficient, while maintaining the integrity of our voter lists.″

Arguments in Support

In support of a prior version of this bill, NextGen, wrote, ″Since California first implemented online voter registration [OVR] in 2012, millions of eligible voters have benefited from a more secure, streamlined, and cost-effective means of registering to vote. The system has significantly improved election security, reducing the risk of errors associated with handwritten forms while increasing participation among eligible citizens. However, despite these successes, a significant gap remains – the current OVR system is only available to individuals who possess a California driver′s license or state identification card issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). This restriction forces many eligible voters—particularly seniors, young voters, low-income individuals, and those with disabilities—into the process of having to complete a paper registration form, which they must then mail or deliver in-person…

″AB 1116 would allow individuals without a DMV-issued ID to register to vote online by providing the last four digits of their Social Security number (the same information they would provide on a paper form) and submitting an electronic image of their signature. The Secretary of State estimates a one-time cost of approximately $1 million, in addition to more minor ongoing costs for enhanced security and signature protocols. The costs are well worth the investment. Not only does the simple technological upgrade of allowing for electronic signatures remove a barrier to voter registration, but it also improves the accuracy of the voter rolls and saves administrative costs over the longer term by reducing the need for manual data entry. Election officials currently spend millions of dollars on the manual processing of paper registration forms — money that could be better allocated to meet other election needs.″

Arguments in Opposition

In opposition to a prior version of this bill, the Kern County Board of Supervisors, wrote, ″Kern county is [] concerned about the administrative burden and added costs this bill may place on county elections offices. The new processes for signature uploads and additional verification protocols could increase operational complexity and present a potential vulnerability without adequate safeguards to prevent ineligible registration. Likewise, the Secretary of State expects one-time costs of approximately $1 million dollars to the State General Fund to modify the voter registration system and database that would enable digital signature uploads and necessary security upgrades. Since there is currently no option on the Secretary of State′s website for the public to upload an item, the agency anticipates ongoing costs of an unknown amount for software and staff workload to validate signatures and screen for malicious files.″

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, costs to SOS could potentially reach the low millions of dollars annually (General Fund).

VOTES

ASM ELECTIONS: 5-2-0
YES: Pellerin, Bennett, Berman, Solache, Stefani
NO: Macedo, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-3-1
YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache
NO: Dixon, Ta, Tangipa
ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 60-18-1
YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
NO: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Gallagher, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Lackey, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis
ABS, ABST OR NV: Flora

SENATE FLOOR: 29-9-2
YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Wiener
NO: Alvarado-Gil, Choi, Dahle, Grove, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Seyarto, Strickland, Valladares
ABS, ABST OR NV: Grayson, Weber Pierson

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 59-19-1
YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
NO: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Flora, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Johnson, Lackey, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis
ABS, ABST OR NV: McKinnor

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