

Date of Hearing: April 30, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Gail Pellerin, Chair

AB 1512 (Committee on Elections) – As Introduced March 10, 2025

SUBJECT: Elections: ballot language.

SUMMARY: Standardizes the way that voting options are presented to voters when they are considering local ballot measures. Standardizes provisions of state law related to voting target locations on ballots and the ballot instructions for local ballot measures. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires, generally, that when local ballot measures appear on the ballot, the voting options that appear on the ballot shall be presented as the words “Yes” and “No,” printed on separate lines with voting targets, to the right of or below the statement of the measure to be voted on. Repeals conflicting voting options and ballot formatting requirements that apply to local ballot measures.
- 2) Makes technical and corresponding changes.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires, generally, that ballot measures submitted to the voters shall be abbreviated on the ballot in a ballot label, followed by the words “Yes” and “No” printed on separate lines, with voting targets, to the right of or below the statement of the measure to be voted on, except as specified. (Elections Code §§13119, 13120, 13207, 13247)
- 2) Requires specified types of local ballot measures to be presented on the ballot in a manner that differs from the generally applicable rules found in the Elections Code. (Education Code §§1004, 5020, 15122, 18333, 18513, 19608, 19724, 24906, 35762, 72026; Government Code §§ 23271, 23355, 23374.5, 29903, 34876.5, 51929, 51930, 51931, 57137; Health and Safety Code §§6463, 6612, 20104; Public Resources Code §5105; Public Utilities Code §§2965, 2973, 22740, 22743; Streets & Highways Code §§1176, 1182, 26064, 26163; Water Code §§12057, 12889.2, 13417, 21929, 21930, 21931, 22171, 22172, 22173, 23224, 25675, 25703, 35520.15, 35520.19, 35884, 39931, 42327, 45271, 45276, 48255, 50976, 60385, 60414, 74099, 74101, 74467, 74833, 74850, 75063, 75065, 75168.3, 75393, 75444, 75936, 76042)

FISCAL EFFECT: None. This bill is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of the Bill:** This is one of the Assembly Elections Committee's annual omnibus bills, containing various minor, technical, and conforming changes to provisions of state law related to elections. All provisions contained in this bill address issues identified by the Chair or staff to the Assembly Elections Committee.
- 2) **Ballot Labels and Layouts for Local Ballot Measures and Previous Legislation:** Various provisions of law outside the Elections Code that govern certain local ballot measures require the ballot question or voting options to be presented in a way that is inconsistent with how

ballot questions generally appear on the ballot in California. For example, for certain types of local bond measures, Government Code Section 29903 requires that the voting options presented to voters appear as “Bonds—Yes” and “Bonds—No,” rather than simply “Yes” and “No” as questions are generally presented on the ballot. This inconsistency can lead to confusion and has led to errors in ballot printing. For example, at least one county incorrectly printed “Bonds—Yes” and “Bonds—No” on the ballot for state bond measures that appeared on the ballot in November 2024. This bill standardizes the way that voting options are presented to voters when they are considering local ballot measures, thereby creating greater uniformity in ballot design.

AB 623 (Berman), Chapter 863, Statutes of 2019, made numerous changes to the way ballots are formatted in an effort to update ballot design requirements and allow county election officials flexibility to create ballots that are accessible and easy to read. AB 623 additionally required the Secretary of State (SOS) to create a Ballot Design Advisory Committee (BDAC), consisting of SOS staff, recognized ballot design experts, and county elections officials. The BDAC was tasked with assisting the SOS in promulgating regulations that prescribe ballot design and format. AB 1219 (Berman), Chapter 676, Statutes of 2023, made various changes to ballot layout requirements in the Elections Code to implement BDAC recommendations. Among other changes, AB 1219 standardized provisions of the Elections Code related to voting target locations and eliminated obsolete ballot instructions that directed a voter to stamp a cross (+) in the square next to the voter’s selection.

This bill makes ballot formatting changes to provisions of state law found outside of the Elections Code similar to changes that were made by AB 623 and AB 1219.

- 3) **Technical Amendments:** Committee staff recommends the following two technical amendments to this bill:

On page 20, line 20 of the bill, strike out “election,” and insert:

election and

On page 21, line 11 of the bill, strike out “election,” and insert:

election and

- 4) **Arguments in Support:** In support of this bill, the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) writes:

The ballot printing specifications chapter of the Elections Code received a major update with AB 1219 (Berman), effective January 1, 2024, based on the recommendations of a ballot design advisory committee convened by the Secretary of State in 2021. The committee included representatives from 18 county election offices.

AB 1512 would make revisions to the ballot language requirements in seven other California codes to bring them into alignment with the Elections Code.

CACEO greatly appreciates the Committee on Elections' desire to standardize ballot design by ensuring consistency in the way that ballots display voting targets and voting choices.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Clerks and Election Officials

Opposition

None on file.

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