
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1512 **Hearing Date:** 7/15/25
Author: Committee on Elections
Version: 5/1/25
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell, Rida Shaikh

Subject: Elections: ballot language

DIGEST

This bill conforms how ballots present voting options on local measures to the requirements of the California Elections Code.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires ballot measures submitted to the voters 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.
- 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.

This bill:

- 1) Requires local ballot measures to appear as 1) in existing law and repeals conflicting voting options and ballot formatting requirements that apply to local ballot measures.
- 2) Makes technical and corresponding changes.

BACKGROUND

Ballot Design Advisory Committee (BDAC). AB 623 (Berman), Chapter 863, Statutes of 2019, made several changes to ballot design, including formatting and allowing election officials the ability to alter the ballot to make it accessible and easy to read. It also required the Secretary of State (SOS) to create the BDAC to provide expertise on ballot design and format issues, assist the SOS in promulgating regulations that prescribe ballot design and format, and answer questions from the SOS regarding ballot design and format issues.

AB 1219 (Berman), Chapter 676, Statutes of 2023, implemented ballot layout changes advised by the BDAC. It also standardized provisions in the Elections Code relating to voting target locations and eliminated outdated ballot instructions.

COMMENTS

- 1) Committee 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 Differences. Several code sections, outside of the Elections Code, include provisions regulating how ballot questions or voting options appear on certain local ballot measures. This creates inconsistencies with how ballot measures are typically presented on the ballot in California.
- 3) The Government Code, for certain type of local bond measures, requires the voting question to be presented as “Bonds – Yes” and “Bonds – No” as opposed to simply a “Yes” and “No.” This can lead to confusion and errors on the ballot. In the 2024 General Election, one county misprinted the voting option for a state bond measure as “Bonds – Yes” and “Bonds – No”, contrary to what the Elections Code mandates.
- 4) Argument in Support. The California Association on Clerks and Election Officials writes:

Existing law specifies requirements that election officials must adhere to when formatting the language that is printed on ballots for various ballot measures relating to local governments, including cities, counties, school districts, and other special districts. 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 SOS 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.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

AB 1219 (Berman), Chapter 676, Statutes of 2023, made various changes and revisions to ballot design requirements and standardized provisions of the Elections Code relating to voting target locations.

AB 623 (Berman), Chapter 863, Statutes of 2019, made numerous changes to the way ballots are formatted and required the SOS to create the BDAC.

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	69 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: California Association of Clerks and Election Officials

Oppose: None received

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