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

Bill No:	AB 1513	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Committee on Elections		
Version:	7/3/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Recall elections: superior courts

DIGEST

This bill replaces the term “trial court” with “superior court” in provisions of the Election Code that govern the recall process and also replaces the use of registered mail with electronic or certified mail for elections-related communications.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires signatures to recall judges of courts of appeal and trial courts to equal 20% of the last vote for the office and makes provisions for when a trial court judge has not previously appeared on the ballot.
- 2) Establishes procedures for the recall of elective officers of the State of California and of all counties, cities, school districts, county boards of education, community college districts, special districts, and judges of courts of appeal and trial courts.
- 3) Allows service of process on a candidate to occur via the Secretary of State (SOS) or county election officials in specified circumstances. In such instances, the SOS or county election officials must forward notice of service of process to candidates via registered mail.
- 4) Requires the SOS, when it is disqualifying a political party from participating in a primary election, to serve notice of this to the party chair via registered mail.
- 5) Requires that when an elector challenges an election, the elector files an affidavit with the superior court of jurisdiction. That affidavit is then served either personally or via registered mail on the defendant.
- 6) Requires that the SOS, after conducting a randomized alphabet drawing to determine the order of candidates on a ballot as prescribed, to inform the local elections official of the results by registered mail.
- 7) Requires that the SOS, when receiving a request for a recount in specified counties, to send a copy of the request by registered mail to each elections official in those counties.

- 8) Requires local election officials to notify the SOS of election dates and the closing of filing for offices and nominations via registered mail.

This bill:

- 1) Replaces the term “trial court” with “superior court” in provisions of the Elections Code related to the recall process and makes related conforming and clarifying changes.
- 2) Establishes that communication between county election officials and the SOS occur via electronic delivery and that communications from governmental offices to nongovernmental entities occur via certified mail.

COMMENTS

- 1) Committee Bill. This is one of the Assembly Elections Committee's annual omnibus bills, containing minor, technical, and conforming changes to the Elections Code.
- 2) Recalls of Judges. The California Constitution once provided for three different types of trial courts in the state: superior, municipal, and justice courts. Proposition 191 in November 1994, Proposition 220 in June 1998, and Proposition 48 in November 2002 consolidated the trial courts, such that superior courts became the state's only trial courts.

Most provisions of the Elections Code that relate to the election of superior court judges use the term “superior court” when referring to those offices. The provisions of the Elections Code governing the recall of superior court judges, however, use the term “trial court” instead. The term “trial court” predates trial court consolidation and is not defined in the Elections Code. Use of that term exclusively in provisions of law related to the recall process can lead to confusion. Accordingly, this bill replaces the term “trial court” with “superior court” in provisions of the Elections Code related to the recall process and makes related conforming and clarifying changes.

- 3) Speeding Communications. This bill contains provisions to ensure that elections-related communications are delivered electronically or via certified mail option, rather than by registered mail, which is a slower option. This bill eliminates all existing situations in which the Elections Code requires something to be sent by registered mail, and instead requires that it be sent either electronically in the case of communications between different governmental bodies, or via certified mail, in the case of communication from a governmental body to an individual or non-governmental organization. AB 502 (Pellerin) included these changes, until it was amended on June 16, 2025 to relate to a different matter.

PRIOR ACTION

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

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

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