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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**  
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1562 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/26  
**Author:** Jackson  
**Version:** 6/2/26  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** No  
**Consultant:** Scott Matsumoto

**Subject:** Elections: precinct board members

**DIGEST**

This bill permits a county to adopt a system in which individuals are randomly selected to serve as poll workers.

**ANALYSIS**

Existing law:

- 1) Defines “precinct board” as the board appointed by the elections official to serve at a single precinct or a consolidated precinct. In an election conducted using vote centers, “precinct board” means the board appointed by the elections official to serve at a vote center. A “precinct board member” is also known as a poll worker.
- 2) Permits any voter, or any individual who possesses specified qualifications, to file an application with an elections official for the position of precinct board member.
- 3) Requires, with some exceptions, that a poll worker be a registered voter in California. Exceptions include a pupil or a nonvoter who is lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States and is otherwise eligible to register to vote except for their lack of citizenship. These exceptions have specific parameters for the duties that can and cannot be performed.
- 4) Requires election officials to make reasonable efforts to recruit poll workers who are fluent in a language if three percent or more of the voting age residents in any precinct are fluent in that language and lack sufficient skill in English to vote without assistance.
- 5) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to appoint a task force of members who have experience in the administration of elections and other relevant backgrounds to study and recommend uniform guidelines for the training of precinct board members. Using the recommendations of the task force, the SOS must adopt uniform standards for the training of precinct board members.
- 6) Requires each member of a precinct board to receive compensation from the governing body of the jurisdiction and requires this sum to be paid out of the treasury of the jurisdiction in which the election is held.

- 7) Permits a state employee to take time off, without loss of pay, to serve as a poll worker on Election Day.
- 8) Provides no person in California shall, on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, mental disability, physical disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, or sexual orientation, be unlawfully denied full and equal access to the benefits of, or be unlawfully subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity that is conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, is funded directly by the state, or receives any financial assistance from the state.

This bill:

- 1) Permits a county to adopt a system through which individuals are randomly selected to serve as poll workers. Every registered voter residing in the jurisdiction is eligible to be selected for service, except for candidates for an office to be voted on at the election. The elections official develops and proposes a plan that must be approved by the county board of supervisors.
- 2) Permits the elections official to disqualify a person if the elections official determines the person is unsuitable to serve, but cannot be disqualified for specified protected classifications in current law. An individual, using a form developed and posted online by the elections official, may be excused from service as a poll worker for ill health, if the individual is at least 70 years old, or for another good or sufficient reason as determined by the elections official.
- 3) Requires the elections official to provide each selected individual a written notice at least 15 days prior to the reporting date designated by the elections official for each election. The selected individual must report to the elections official on the reporting date stated in the written notice and serve the duration of the election. The selected individual must receive compensation for service and is subject to the same protections that apply to an employee who takes time off to serve on a jury.

### **BACKGROUND**

Nebraska. Nebraska permits jurisdictions to “draft” election workers in the same fashion as courts select jury members. According to Nebraska state law, a draftee poll worker is required to serve as an election workers for two years in a county with a population less than 400,000 inhabitants, or four years in a county with a population of 400,000 or more inhabitants. All draftee election workers are randomly selected from the county’s list of registered voters and are required to be of good repute and character and be able to read and write the English language, except as provided. Under Nebraska’s law, citizens are not excluded from serving as a draftee election workers unless excused by reason of ill health or other good and sufficient reason. A person who is selected and fails to serve can be found guilty of neglecting their duties.

One county that uses election worker draftees is Douglas County. According to the Douglas County Election Commission website, Douglas County serves more than 360,000 registered voters at approximately 230 precincts across the county and it takes up to 3,000 election workers to administer each election. More than fifty-percent of all

election workers are volunteers and the Election Commission drafts voters to serve in various election roles in order to ensure elections are administered properly and fairly. Drafted election workers are notified approximately 70 days prior to an election and required to work multiple elections, four elections in Douglas County, to complete their required service.

In Douglas County, if a person is at least 70 years old, they may opt out of serving as a elections worker. Other individuals who are unable to fulfill their election duty for health or other sufficient reasons are required to provide certain documentation to postpone or be excused altogether. A draftee who fails to serve at an election or attend training may be guilty of a misdemeanor, and their name may be submitted to local law enforcement for citation.

### COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. When people do not understand how democracy works, it becomes easier to manipulate and easier to break. When only a small group of people are running our elections, public trust begins to erode. This bill strengthens our democracy and encourages civic engagement by authorizing county election officials to adopt a system in which individuals are randomly selected to serve as poll workers for elections. This bill is intended to bring people closer to the democratic process, recognizing democracy works best when more people are inside the room, not locked out of it.
- 2) Other Methods for Civic Engagement. This bill is one of many potential paths to increase civic engagement, participation, and voter confidence in California's electoral process. The committee should consider whether creating a system similar to jury service is the proper solution for the problem the author seeks to address. For example, various education and outreach methods, such as an education campaign, events, mail, and social media, may be a more suitable answer to the ongoing endeavors to bolster civic participation, engagement, and confidence in elections.
- 3) Sunset Date – Suggested Amendment. While it is not known which counties may pursue to implement this selection process for poll workers, it might be wise to have some mechanism to determine whether a county actually implemented a selection system and whether it was worthwhile endeavor. Committee staff recommends amending the bill to include a sunset provision of January 1, 2033.
- 4) Argument in Support. In a letter supporting this bill, PowerCA Action, stated, in part, the following:

Poll workers play a critical role in ensuring accessible, fair, and well functioning elections. They support voters at the polls, uphold election integrity, and help ensure a smooth Election Day experience. At a time when voter confidence has declined and participation, especially among historically underrepresented communities, has dropped, California must take proactive steps to strengthen civic engagement and trust in our democratic institutions. AB 1562 provides a meaningful opportunity to do just that. By expanding how poll workers are recruited, this bill creates more pathways for Californians, particularly young

people and communities of color, to engage directly in the electoral process. Increased exposure to how elections function can deepen civic understanding, build trust, and encourage life-long participation.

**PRIOR ACTION**

Assembly Floor:	56 - 10
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 1

**POSITIONS**

**Sponsor:** Author

**Support:** PowerCA Action

**Oppose:** One individual

**-- END --**