

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2281 (Berman) – As Introduced February 19, 2026

Policy Committee: Elections Vote: 6 - 1

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Secretary of State's (SOS's) Office of Elections Cybersecurity (OEC) to assess whether additional state resources are needed to replace election cybersecurity resources previously provided by the federal government.

This bill also authorizes the OEC to consult with academic researchers as part of OEC's existing duty to develop best practices for protecting against threats to election cybersecurity.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Minor and absorbable costs to the SOS.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has cut critical funding, coordination, and support that helped states guard against threats to our election systems. Given the loss of federal election cybersecurity infrastructure, AB 2281 would direct the OEC [to] assess if additional state resources are needed to ensure that California officials continue to have the information and tools necessary to defend our democracy from cyber-attacks.

2) **Background. OEC.** AB 3075 (Berman), Chapter 241, Statutes of 2018, established the OEC within the SOS to coordinate efforts between the SOS and local elections officials to reduce the likelihood and severity of cyber incidents that could interfere with the security or integrity of elections in California. The OEC also monitors and counteracts false or misleading information regarding the electoral process that may suppress voter participation, cause confusion, or disrupt the ability to ensure a secure election.

Federal Election Cybersecurity Resources. In 2018, federal law established the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) within the federal Department of Homeland Security to maintain public trust and confidence in U.S. election systems. Since CISA's creation, many state and local elections officials have relied on CISA's free and voluntary assistance, expertise, and resources to help protect election systems. Last year, the federal government made considerable changes to federal election cybersecurity support, funding, and infrastructure, including cutting funds to two information sharing centers

supported by CISA. In response, the non-profit organization that operates both centers announced temporarily transitioning to charging state and local governments for membership and providing fee-based services. This bill requires the OEC to assess whether additional state resources are needed to replace election cybersecurity resources previously provided by the federal government.

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