

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2604 (Berman)

As Amended May 18, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to implement and make available to county registrars a system that allows voters to access text-message-based signature curing.

Major Provisions

- 1) Provides, for purposes of this bill, that "signature curing" means procedures in which an elections official sends a signature cure form to a voter whose vote by mail (VBM) ballot envelope was missing their signature or where the voter's signature did not compare to signature(s) in the voter's registration record, to verify under penalty of perjury that the voter completed and returned the VBM ballot in question.
- 2) Requires any text-message-based signature curing service to ensure data privacy and ballot security for voters.
- 3) Requires the SOS to make available on its internet website data relating to the text-message-based signature curing program, including, by county:
 - a) The number of voters who cured missing or mismatched signatures using text-message-based signature curing system; and,
 - b) The number of voters to whom text-message-based signature curing was offered.
- 4) Permits the SOS to combine the text-message-based signature curing system with the ballot tracking system that a county or the SOS maintains that allows a voter to track their VBM ballot through the mail system and as the VBM ballot is processed by the county elections official.

COMMENTS

It is not uncommon for a VBM ballot to be returned in an envelope that is missing the voter's signature or with a signature that doesn't compare to signatures in the voter's record. In the last several years, the Legislature has taken a number of steps to reduce the number of VBM ballots that are rejected for these reasons. Notably, AB 477 (Mullin), Chapter 726, Statutes of 2015, and SB 759 (McGuire), Chapter 446, Statutes of 2018, created processes for a voter to verify their VBM ballot if the voter failed to sign the VBM ballot return envelope, or if the signature on that envelope did not compare to the signatures in the voter's registration record. These processes are commonly referred to as "cure processes," and the forms used by voters to verify their ballots as a part of these processes are commonly referred to as "signature cure forms."

Under existing law, a voter may submit their signature cure form by mail, in person, via a ballot dropbox, a voting location, email, or fax. Additionally, in an effort to modernize the process, AB 1037 (Berman), Chapter 673, Statutes of 2023, permits a voter to return a completed signature cure form by electronic means, if such means are made available by the elections official, as specified.

Some counties have implemented an electronic signature cure process that allows a voter to cure their ballot using a text platform, also known as a text-message-based system or a text to cure system. Voters sign on the screen of their phone or tablet and submit it using a secure platform. For example, Contra Costa County Registrar of Voters implemented a text message signature cure process during 2024 primary election. For the 2025 statewide special election, Contra Costa sent 3,643 cure letters for nonmatching signatures and voters cured 971 signatures, including 284 using Text to Cure and 58 using email (with the remainder by mail). They received feedback that this option was particularly appealing for younger voters, and an important benefit since 18-24 year-old voters make up the largest demographic in the county whose signatures are challenged and can be cured.

Please see the policy committee analysis for a full discussion of this bill.

According to the Author

"In our last general election in November 2024, over 69% of rejected vote-by-mail ballots were for either a missing or non-matching signature. That amounted to nearly 85,000 ballots. Current law provides that if there is a missing or non-matching signature on the vote-by-mail ballot envelope, our elections officials notify the voter of the problem and how to correct the issue. In response to my AB 1037 from 2023, several counties have chosen to offer voters mobile curing as a secure, effective, and voter-friendly option to correct a missing or non-matching signature. Unfortunately, far too many curable ballots are still not corrected. Accordingly, AB 2604 would simply provide for statewide adoption of mobile ballot curing, thereby making it more likely that eligible ballots are counted and less likely that voters are disenfranchised."

Arguments in Support

In support of a prior version of this bill, the sponsors, California Voter Foundation and Protect Democracy United, wrote: "As documented by the Secretary of State, a significant share of rejected vote-by-mail ballots results from missing or non-matching signatures—comprising nearly half of all rejections in the November 2022 election and more than two-thirds in the November 2024 election. These preventable errors disproportionately affect voters who otherwise fully comply with all voting requirements. AB 2604 addresses this challenge by facilitating statewide adoption of mobile ballot curing, allowing voters to quickly and securely resolve signature issues through a text-message-based system..."

"In recent elections, tens of thousands of ballots have gone uncounted due to missing or mismatched signatures...These ballot rejections disproportionately impact young voters and first-time voters. Research conducted by the Center for Inclusive Democracy found that voters aged 18-24 were three times more likely to have their mail ballots rejected than voters overall, with nonmatching signatures the top reason for rejection among this age group.

"Providing a mobile ballot curing solution allows young California voters to use technology that they are already familiar with to cure their ballot. In addition to the enfranchisement benefits of this process, it is significantly more cost-effective to implement a solution statewide than the current county-by-county approach, based on information from leading companies that offer these services."

Arguments in Opposition

None received.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, costs of an unknown, but potentially significant, amount to the SOS to implement a statewide text-message-based signature curing system and report information online. (General Fund).

VOTES**ASM ELECTIONS: 6-2-0**

YES: Pellerin, Bennett, Berman, Elhawary, Solache, Stefani

NO: Gallagher, Johnson

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0

YES: Wicks, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

NO: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

VERSION: May 18, 2026

CONSULTANT: Nichole Becker / ELECTIONS / (916) 319-2094

FN: 0002988