SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2604 (Berman) - Elections: ballot curing

Version: June 22, 2026
Urgency: No
Hearing Date: August 3, 2026
Policy Vote: E. & C.A. 4 - 1
Mandate: No
Consultant: Robert Ingenito

Bill Summary: AB 2604 would require the Secretary of State (SOS) to implement and make available to county registrars a system that allows voters to access electronic signature curing.

Fiscal Impact: SOS indicates that it would incur annual costs in the millions of dollars to implement a statewide text-message-based ballot curing system (General Fund, see Staff Comments).

Background: As vote-by-mail (VBM) has become the predominant method of voting in California, the Legislature has enacted a series of measures to reduce the rejection of ballots due to missing or mismatched signatures on ballot identification envelopes. SB 759 (McGuire, 2018) established a signature cure process for voters whose ballot envelope signature does not match the signature on file. SB 523 (McGuire, 2019) expanded these protections by requiring counties to notify voters whose ballot envelopes are missing a signature and aligning the cure process for missing signatures with that for mismatched signatures.

Current law allows voters to submit a corrective signature statement in person or by mail, fax, email, or, where available, through electronic means. AB 1037 (Berman, 2023) expressly authorized elections officials to accept electronically submitted signature cure forms. In response, several counties have adopted text-message-based ballot curing systems that allow voters to securely complete and submit a signature cure form from a mobile device. For example, Contra Costa County implemented such a system beginning with the 2024 primary election. During the 2025 statewide special election, approximately 29 percent of cured signatures in the county were completed through the text-based platform, with election officials reporting that the option was particularly effective in reaching younger voters, who accounted for a disproportionate share of ballots requiring signature correction.

Proposed Law: This bill would do the following:

- Require SOS to implement and make available to county election officials a system allowing voters to access electronic signature curing to mitigate issues related to a voter's missing or noncomparing signature on the voter's VBM ballot envelope.

- Provide that any electronic signature curing service ensures data privacy and ballot security for voters.

- Require SOS to publish electronic signature curing data on its website. This data includes, by county, the number of voters who cured missing or noncomparing signatures using electronic signature curing and the number of voters to whom text-message-based signature curing was offered.

- Permit SOS to combine an electronic signature curing system with existing ballot tracking notifications.

Related Legislation: 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.

Staff Comments: SOS indicates that implementing this bill would require substantial modifications to both the statewide voter registration database (VoteCal) and county Election Management Systems (EMS). Under the current ballot tracking infrastructure, VoteCal can transmit voter information to the state's ballot tracking vendor, but it is not designed to receive voter data or signature information in return. Enabling the two-way exchange of voter information and signature images required by this bill would exceed the scope of the existing contract and require a new or expanded procurement. In addition, county EMS vendors have indicated that significant system integration and development would be necessary at the local level. SOS further notes that these technology changes could not reasonably be completed by the bill's January 1, 2027, implementation date given ongoing workload and resource commitments associated with the 2026 statewide election.

SOS has identified two potential approaches for implementing a statewide text-message-based ballot curing system. Under the first option, SOS would develop, operate, and maintain the system in-house using state staff. This approach is estimated to cost approximately $5.2 million in the first year, $3.4 million annually in the second and third years, and $2.2 million annually thereafter. These costs include 13 new positions and initial staffing resources to promulgate regulations. Under the second option, the SOS would procure and configure a commercial off-the-shelf platform through a vendor contract. This approach is estimated to cost approximately $6.2 million in the first year, $3.8 million in the second year, and $3.4 million annually thereafter. These costs include the vendor contract, seven new positions, and initial staffing resources to promulgate regulations.

Alternatively, the bill authorizes the SOS to provide counties with the resources necessary to implement their own local text-message-based ballot curing systems rather than developing a statewide platform. The fiscal impact of this approach is uncertain but could exceed the cost of a statewide system because county implementation needs would vary significantly. It is also unclear whether the bill contemplates direct state funding to counties for local system development or whether the SOS would instead incur additional staffing and contract costs to assist counties in establishing their own systems.

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