
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2604
Author: Berman (D), et al.
Amended: 8/13/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE ELECTIONS & C.A. COMMITTEE: 4-1, 6/30/26
AYES: Wiener, Allen, Cervantes, Umberg
NOES: Choi

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-2, 8/13/26
AYES: Cervantes, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NOES: Seyarto, Dahle

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 58-20, 5/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Elections: ballot curing

SOURCE: California Voter Foundation
Protect Democracy United

DIGEST: This bill requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to implement and make available to county election officials a system that allows voters to access electronic signature curing.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires every active registered voter to receive a vote by mail (VBM) ballot for any election. A VBM ballot is timely cast if it is received by the voter's elections official by mail no later than seven days after Election Day and is postmarked or time/date stamped on or before Election Day.
- 2) Requires election officials to compare the voter's signature on the identification envelope with the voter's signatures on file upon receiving a VBM ballot. If the

elections official determines the signature on a VBM ballot return envelope does not compare to the signatures in the voter's registration record or is missing, a voter is mailed a notice and a form detailing how to remedy the issue. This process is also known as "curing" a signature.

- 3) Provides a voter's VBM ballot is not rejected if the voter submits a signature cure form by 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline and the signature on that form compares to a signature in the voter's registration record.
- 4) Permits a voter to submit their completed statement by email, facsimile transmission, or by other electronic means made available by the local elections official.
- 5) Requires a local elections official offering other electronic means for submission of a signature verification or unsigned VBM envelope statement to establish appropriate privacy and security protocols that ensure the information transmitted is received directly and securely by the elections official and is only used for the stated purposes of verifying the signature on the voter's ballot.

This bill:

- 1) Requires the 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.
- 2) Provides that any electronic signature curing service ensures data privacy and security for voters.
- 3) Requires the 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 electronic signature curing was offered.
- 4) Permits the SOS to combine an electronic signature curing system with existing ballot tracking notifications.

Background

Curing Signatures Electronically. 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. In addition to these methods, AB 1037 (Berman, Chapter 673,

Statutes of 2023) allowed voters to return a completed signature cure form by electronic means if service was made available by the elections official.

Some counties have implemented an electronic signature cure process that allows a voter to cure using a text platform, also known as a text-to-cure system. Voters sign the screen of their phone or tablet and submit it using a secure platform.

The Contra Costa County Registrar of Voters (ROV) implemented a text message signature cure process during the 2024 primary election. In the 2025 statewide special election, the Contra Costa ROV sent 3,643 cure letters for noncomparing signatures and voters cured 971 signatures, including 284 using text-to-cure and 58 using email.

Comments

Author's Statement. In the last general election in November 2024, over 69% of rejected VBM ballots were for either a missing signature or for a signature that did not compare to the signature associated with the voter's registration record. This amounted to nearly 85,000 ballots. Current law provides that if there is a missing or noncomparing signature on the VBM ballot envelope, our election officials notify the voter of the problem and how to correct the issue. In response to AB 1037, several counties have chosen to offer voters electronic curing as a secure, effective, and voter-friendly option to correct a missing or a signature that does not compare to the one on the voter's registration record. Unfortunately, far too many curable ballots are still not corrected. Accordingly, this bill simply provides for statewide adoption of electronic ballot curing, thereby making it more likely that eligible ballots are counted and less likely that voters are disenfranchised.

Electronic Signature Curing. Changing the wording from "text-message-based signature curing" to "electronic signature curing," allows for other methods, beyond text messaging, to be used for signature curing. For example, in Los Angeles County, a voter currently has the ability to return their signature cure form by mail, email, fax, text message, delivering the form in-person, or dropping off the form at a ballot dropbox or vote center. The change in wording does not limit a county to only text messages and allows for other electronic means.

The expanded wording is also aligned with the author's intent. The author sees this bill as a way to streamline the curing process and help get more ballots cured faster by facilitating statewide adoption of electronic ballot curing, in particular by having access to electronic ballot curing for all California voters.

Alternatively, “electronic” could also be interpreted with a narrow meaning. For example, the SOS could implement these provisions to only apply to facsimile submissions.

Related/Prior 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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

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).

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/19/26)

California Voter Foundation (co-source)
Protect Democracy United (co-source)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
California Association of Black Lawyers
California Initiative for Technology & Democracy
California Common Cause
Campaign Legal Center
CFT – A Union of Educators and Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO
Disability Rights California
Human Rights First
League of Women Voters of California
NextGen California
Responsive Gov Action
SEIU California
Verified Voting

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/19/26)

Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In a letter supporting this bill, Verified Voting stated, in part, the following:

Several counties have already demonstrated that mobile curing is an effective, secure, and voter-friendly tool. [This bill] would build on that success by enabling the SOS to implement or support a uniform statewide system, improving cure rates and reducing the number of ballots that go uncounted.

[...]

Providing a mobile ballot curing solution allows California voters to use technology that they are already familiar with to cure their ballot. Benefits of adopting a solution statewide, rather than the current county-by-county approach, also include significant cost savings.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: In a letter opposing this bill, SOS Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D., suggested amendments for this bill. Below is a summary of their proposed amendments:

- Replace specific provisions in the bill and insert language that adopts and publishes signature curing technology standards and regulations governing the certification and use of signature verification and signature curing technology. This includes technology capable of capturing digital signatures.
- Provide language that signature verification and/or signature curing technology must not be used unless it has been certified by the SOS. This includes a prohibition of certifying signature verification and signature curing technology by the SOS unless it meets the SOS' standards and regulations.
- Require counties, instead of the SOS, to collect and publish data required by this bill.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 58-20, 5/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Flora, Gallagher,
Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Johnson, Lackey, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez,
Ta, Tangipa, Wallis

NO VOTE RECORDED: Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez

Prepared by: Scott Matsumoto / E. & C.A. / (916) 651-4106
8/19/26 15:44:14

**** **END** ****