

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 930 (Ward)

As Amended August 29, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Makes various changes to state law governing voter-requested recounts of election results. Standardizes laws related to the receipt of vote by mail (VBM) ballots.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Expressly provide that any special recount board member who tallies ballots must be eligible to register to vote in this state.
- 2) Add double-jointing language to avoid chaptering problems with AB 1513 (Elections Committee) of the current legislative session.

COMMENTS

Unlike some other states, California law does not provide for an "automatic" recount in any election contest. Instead, state law allows any voter to request a recount of an election contest once the official canvass of results from the election is complete. Voter-initiated recounts are fairly rare in California, in part because a voter who requests a recount must pay for the recount in advance, and the voter's money is refunded only if the recount changes the outcome of the election in favor of the candidate or position of a ballot measure on which behalf the recount was conducted. A voter-requested recount cannot change the outcome of an election unless every vote cast in the contest is part of the recount. State law also allows the elections official, a superior court, or the Governor to order a recount in specified circumstances.

This bill proposes various changes to state laws governing voter-requested recounts. Many of those changes are relatively minor or clarifying, codify certain aspects of recount regulations adopted by the Secretary of State, or modernize the law to more closely reflect current election technology and procedures.

The Elections Code includes two different code sections that outline rules for the receipt of VBM ballots: one section which applies generally, and a second section that applies only to certain types of mailed ballot elections. While the policies found in these sections generally have been aligned, recently-enacted legislation inadvertently failed to amend one of the relevant sections, thereby creating inconsistencies. This bill once again aligns the policies in those code sections, thereby standardizing the rules that apply to the receipt of VBM ballots in elections.

While existing law requires that recount boards be made up of *voters* (i.e., individuals who are registered to vote in California), this bill gives elections officials the discretion to appoint any individual to a recount board. The Senate amendments, however, expressly provide that any special recount board member who tallies ballots must be eligible to register to vote in this state. This bill, as amended in the Senate, is generally consistent with prior Assembly actions.

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

According to the Author

"AB 930 is about ensuring every Californian's vote is counted and that the democratic process remains fair and transparent. By modernizing our elections procedures—like extending the deadline for mail-in ballots and clarifying recount processes—we close gaps that can leave voters disenfranchised or confused. These updates are crucial for strengthening voter trust and improving access to the ballot box across our diverse communities."

Arguments in Support

The sponsor of this bill, the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials, writes in support, "AB 930 would provide a voter the option of requesting a recount be conducted in a specified order of the batches in which the ballots were scanned rather than by precinct. The bill would also allow a manual recount to be conducted using the ballot images rather than the paper ballots. The bill would clarify that existing law prohibiting unauthorized access to the voting system and copying and distributing a voter's personal identifying information also applies during a recount. Additionally, AB 930 would require the voter requesting the recount to specify in writing before the recount is commenced all relevant material they wish to review during the recount. To ensure recount boards can be appropriately staffed and to bring the provisions related to the makeup of the recount boards in alignment with the existing requirement that all actual costs of the recount are recoverable from the voter requesting the recount, the bill also would remove a requirement that a member of a recount board be paid the same amount as precinct board members who worked in a polling place or vote center."

Arguments in Opposition

In opposition to this bill, Real Impact writes, "While presented as an effort to improve transparency, this bill introduces several concerns:

"Extended Ballot Counting: Allowing ballots to arrive up to seven days after Election Day could delay results and reduce public confidence in election integrity and timeliness.

"Unclear Recount Costs: The bill allows voters to request a recount but offers no transparency about the daily costs involved, potentially limiting access to only those who can afford it.

"Manual Handling Risks: The recount process allows for manual handling of ballots, raising security concerns—even with safeguards.

"Uncertain Outcomes: A changed result only becomes official if all votes are recounted, creating confusion and inconsistency in how recounts are handled and certified."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

VOTES:**ASM ELECTIONS: 5-2-0**

YES: Pellerin, Bennett, Berman, Solache, Stefani

NO: Macedo, Lackey

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

NO: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 59-16-4

YES: 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, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Ellis, Gallagher, Hadwick, Hoover, Lackey, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis

ABS, ABST OR NV: Dixon, Flora, Jeff Gonzalez, Papan

UPDATED

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