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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**  
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** SB 1420 **Hearing Date:** 4/7/26  
**Author:** Richardson  
**Version:** 3/26/26  
**Urgency:** Yes **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Scott Matsumoto

**Subject:** Vote by mail ballots and early voting

**DIGEST**

This bill requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to promulgate regulations and provide information in the state voter information guide (VIG) about early in-person voting opportunities and voting vote by mail (VBM) ballots at voting locations.

**ANALYSIS**

Existing law:

- 1) Requires every active registered voter to receive a VBM ballot for any election. Election officials must begin mailing a VBM ballot no later than 29 days before Election Day.
- 2) Authorizes any county, pursuant to the Voter's Choice Act (VCA), to conduct elections where polling locations, called vote centers, and ballot drop-off locations are available prior to and on Election Day.
- 3) Requires non-VCA counties to provide at least one early voting location on the Saturday before Election Day.
- 4) Permits a voter to vote their VBM ballot, without the identification envelope, in person if the polling location has real-time access to the county's election management system, verifies the voter has not returned their VBM ballot, changes the status of the voter to an in-person voter, and the voter provides their name, their address, and signs the roster for the voting location. The county elections official must establish procedures to ensure that a voter who casts a ballot does not submit more than one VBM ballot without the identification envelope, and the precinct board or vote center election board must comply with those procedures.
- 5) Requires the state VIG to provide voters with information about an upcoming statewide election, such as information regarding each state ballot measure, specified candidate information, and the rights of voters.

This bill:

- 1) Requires the SOS to promulgate regulations setting procedures for election officials to follow and implement voter education and outreach initiatives that provide the public with information about the processes by which a voter may vote their VBM ballot in-person at a voting location and in-person voting opportunities on the Saturday before Election Day. These regulations must be posted online.
- 2) Require the state VIG to include information about in-person voting opportunities on the Saturday before Election Day and the process by which a voter may vote their VBM ballot in person at a voting location.
- 3) Contains an urgency clause to take effect immediately.

### **BACKGROUND**

Vote by Mail Usage in California. Californians have increasingly relied on VBM ballots to cast a vote. According to the SOS' office, the 1962 general election saw 2.63% of California voters vote by mail. For the 2024 presidential general election, 80.76% of California voters voted by mail. For the 2025 statewide special election, 88.89% of California voters voted by mail. This increase in mail voting over the past 60 years is a result of many factors ranging from legislation expanding access to VBM ballots, paid postage on return envelopes, and additional elected offices resulting in longer, sometimes more complicated, and time-consuming ballots.

Assembly Bill 626 (Pellerin). AB 626 (Pellerin), Chapter 661, Statutes of 2023, responded to the high volume of VBM ballots arriving in the final days before an election and the desire to have faster election results. AB 626 allowed voters to vote their VBM ballot at a polling location if the poll worker has the ability to determine the voter has not already submitted a VBM ballot and changes the voter from a VBM voter to an in-person voter. If the voter has not already voted, then the voter is able to use their VBM ballot to vote at the polling location after providing their name, their address, and signing the roster.

Placer County, a VCA county, provides this service at all its vote centers. Known as "Sign, Scan, and Go," the service was offered during the statewide elections in 2024. The process allowed voters who drop off their VBM ballots at vote centers to have them scanned and counted at the voting location instead of having to wait until after the VBM ballot has been transported to the main election processing site for signature verification and ballot processing. This resulted in Placer County lowering its processing time by about three or four days in 2024 compared to previous elections. According to the Placer County Registrar of Voters, in 2025, the processing time was similar to the elections in 2024.

### **COMMENTS**

Author's Statement. The long delays in calling the results of elections in California leave candidates and voters unsure of important outcomes and open our state up to bad-faith attacks by election deniers. Recent legislation has created several new voting options that will help speed up how long it takes to process ballots. With the adoption of

accepting mail-in ballots at physical voting locations, as implemented by AB 626, in Placer County processing time improved by three to four days, but widespread adoption of new voting options remains slow and fragmented across California. By increasing voters' knowledge and creating statewide guidelines to address implementation and security, California can quickly expand its use of these methods and better address the long delays that surround our elections.

### **RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION**

AB 626 (Pellerin), Chapter 661, Statutes of 2023, allowed voters to vote their VBM ballot at a polling location if the poll worker has the ability to determine if the voter has already submitted a VBM ballot and changes the voter from a VBM voter to an in-person voter.

SB 1249 (Wilson), Chapter 296, Statutes of 2025, allowed voters to vote their VBM ballot at the county elections office or at a satellite location prior to the close of the polls on Election Day. The bill also required counties who do not conduct their elections pursuant to the VCA to provide at least one early voting location on the Saturday before Election Day.

### **POSITIONS**

**Sponsor:** California Voter Foundation  
Protect Democracy United

**Support:** Campaign Legal Center  
CPCA Advocates  
Human Rights First  
League of Women Voters of California  
NAACP California-Hawaii State Conference  
NextGen California  
Verified Voting

**Oppose:** Five individuals

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