
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 1420 (Richardson) - Vote by mail ballots and early voting

Version: March 26, 2026
Urgency: Yes
Hearing Date: April 20, 2026

Policy Vote: E. & C.A. 5 - 0
Mandate: Yes
Consultant: Robert Ingenito

Bill Summary: SB 1420 would require 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.

Fiscal Impact:

- SOS would incur a one-time cost of \$55,000 to promulgate regulations (General Fund). Additionally, SOS indicates that any costs related to the VIG would be minor.
- The California Association of County Elections Clerks indicates that any costs from resulting from the mandate in the bill would be minor and absorbable.

Background: California voters have increasingly relied on VBM ballots to cast a vote. SOS data indicate that, for the 1962 general election 2.6 percent of the state's voters did so by mail. That percentage rose to 81 percent for the 2024 General Election, and 89 percent for the statewide special election in 2025. This increase reflects many factors, including (1) legislation expanding access to VBM ballots, (2) paid postage on return envelopes, and (3) additional elected offices resulting in longer, sometimes more complicated, and time-consuming ballots.

AB 626 (Pellerin, 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. Specifically, AB 626 allowed voters to vote their VBM ballot at a polling location if the poll worker (1) has the ability to determine the voter has not already submitted a VBM ballot, and (2) 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.

Proposed Law: This bill, among other things, would do the following:

- Require 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 would be required to be posted online.

- Require the 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.

Related 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 Voter Choice Act to provide at least one early voting location on the Saturday before Election Day.

Staff Comments: Placer County offers a program known as “Sign, Scan, and Go.” It was offered during the statewide elections in 2024, and allows 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.

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