
THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1420
Author: Richardson (D)
Amended: 5/14/26
Vote: 27 - Urgency

SENATE ELECTIONS & C.A. COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/7/26

AYES: Wiener, Choi, Allen, Cervantes, Umberg

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SUBJECT: Vote by mail ballots and early voting

SOURCE: California Voter Foundation
Protect Democracy United

DIGEST: This bill 1) requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to promulgate regulations establishing uniform procedures for election officials that allow a voter to vote their vote by mail (VBM) ballot at a polling location; and 2) requires information to be included in the state voter information guide (VIG) about early in-person voting opportunities.

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 a required number of VBM 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. Non-VCA counties must also provide a required

number of VBM ballot drop-off locations available prior to and on Election Day.

- 4) Permits a voter to vote their VBM ballot in person, without the identification envelope, if the polling location has real-time access to the county's election management system, verifies the voter has not returned their VBM ballot, and changes the status of the voter to an in-person voter. The voter must provide their name, their address, and sign 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 establishing uniform procedures for election officials that allow a voter to vote their VBM ballot in person at a polling location. The SOS must consider different voting technologies and systems used in other counties and consult county election officials and election stakeholders when promulgating these regulations. These regulations must also be posted online.
- 2) Requires the SOS to include information about early voting opportunities, voting, and casting a VBM ballot in person when preparing voter education and outreach plans and templates for county voter education and outreach plans.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Contains an urgency clause to take effect immediately.

Background

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 using their VBM ballot at a polling location if the poll worker is able to determine the voter has not already submitted a VBM ballot and changes the

voter's status from a VBM voter to an in-person voter. If the voter has not already voted, then the voter provides their name and address, signs the roster, and uses their VBM ballot to vote at the polling location.

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. This process allows voters to have their VBM ballots scanned and counted at vote centers instead of waiting until after the VBM ballot has been processed and counted. This resulted in Placer County lowering its processing time by about three to four days in 2024 compared to previous elections. According to the Placer County Registrar of Voters, elections conducted in 2025 had similar processing times to elections conducted in 2024.

Comments

Author's Statement. Long delays in calling the results of elections in California leave candidates and voters unsure of important outcomes and opens our state up to bad-faith attacks by election deniers. Recent legislation meant to address these delays created several new voting options that will help speed up how long it takes to process ballots. While counties that have already adopted these new methods have shown improvements in post-election processing time, such as with Placer County's adoption of accepting mail-in ballots at physical voting locations, widespread adoption remains slow and fragmented due to counties' elections officials lack of confidence in how to securely and efficiently implement the new methods. By directing the Secretary of State to share information with officials on how to implement these options and promote them through voter education and outreach plans, California can make full use of the voting methods crafted to improve our elections system.

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.

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

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/14/26)

California Voter Foundation (source)
Protect Democracy United (source)
Campaign Legal Center
CPCA Advocates
Human Rights First
League of Women Voters of California
NAACP California-Hawaii State Conference
NextGen California
Responsive Gov Action
Verified Voting

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/14/26)

5 individuals

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