
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

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Author:	Cervantes and Pellerin		
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Subject: Elections

DIGEST

This bill calls a special statewide election for November 4, 2025, requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to submit ACA 8 (Rivas and McGuire) of 2025 to the voters for their consideration, and provides for the conduct of the election. This bill also provides modifications for the June 2, 2026, statewide primary election if ACA 8 is approved by voters.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that every constitutional amendment, bond measure, or other legislative measure submitted to the people by the Legislature must appear on the ballot of the first statewide election occurring at least 131 days after the adoption of the proposal by the Legislature.
- 2) Requires all state measures in all elections at which state measures are submitted to a vote of the voters be numbered in a continuous sequence, commencing with the number "1" and continuing in numerical sequence for a period of 10 years from the year of commencement.
- 3) Requires the SOS to provide a translation of the ballot title and summary and the ballot label in specific languages to a city, county, or city and county for each state measure submitted to the voters in a statewide election not later than 68 days before that election. The SOS must consult with an advisory body consisting of language experts and nonpartisan organizations that advocate on behalf of, or provide services to, individuals that speak that language. These translations must be made available for public examination in the same time and manner, as the state voter information guide is made available for public examination.
- 4) Requires the public be permitted to examine the condensed ballot title and summary for at least 20 days and permits a voter to seek a writ of mandate requiring a condensed ballot title and summary, or portion thereof, to be amended or deleted, as specified.

- 5) Provides various requirements for the creation and format of the ballot label, including listing supporters and opponents on the ballot.
- 6) Requires every active registered voter to receive a vote by mail (VBM) ballot for any election and after it is voted, provides a process for voters to cure a missing or noncomparing signature on their VBM ballot envelope.
- 7) Authorizes any county, pursuant to the Voter's Choice Act (VCA), to conduct elections using vote centers and have ballot drop-off locations available prior to and on Election Day, instead of operating traditional polling places.
- 8) Requires a precinct boundary to be fixed in a manner so that the number of voters in the precinct does not exceed 1,000 on the 88th day prior to Election Day, except as otherwise provided. If certain conditions are met, election officials must divide the territory within which the election is to be held into special election or consolidated election precincts by consolidating existing precincts.
- 9) Requires candidates for certain offices to pay a filing fee at the time the candidate obtains nomination forms from the elections official. A candidate who is running for an office for which there is a filing fee is permitted to submit a petition containing signatures of registered voters to reduce or waive the filing fee. These are known as the signatures-in-lieu of filing fees petitions (SIL petitions).
- 10) Requires SIL petitions to be made available beginning 60 days before the first day for circulating nomination papers. SIL petitions must be filed at least 30 days before the close of the nomination period.
- 11) Requires the SOS to prepare and release certain preelection reports and notices by a certain number of days before an election, as specified.

This bill:

- 1) Calls a special statewide election to be held on November 4, 2025, requires the SOS to submit ACA 8 to the voters, and designates it as Proposition 50.
- 2) Permits a local district, city, or other political subdivision that is scheduled to have an election on November 4, 2025, to consolidate that election with the special statewide election if the election was called by the local jurisdiction on or before August 8, 2025. A district, city, or other political subdivision is prohibited from calling a special election to be held on November 4, 2025, after the effective date of this bill.
- 3) Requires the SOS to provide a translation of the ballot title and summary and the ballot label for Proposition 50 at a date determined by the SOS. The SOS is not required to consult with an advisory body of language experts and nonpartisan organizations that advocate on behalf of individuals that speak that language for these translations.
- 4) Permits translations of the ballot title and summary and the ballot label may be made available for public examination at a date later than the start of the public examination period for the state voter information guide, provided that the

translations remain available for public examination for eight days. The public is permitted to examine the condensed ballot title and summary of Proposition 50 for eight days.

- 5) Permits a voter to seek a writ of mandate for the purposes of requiring the condensed ballot title and summary, or portions thereof, to be amended or deleted only within that eight-day period.
- 6) Specifies that the ballot label for Proposition 50 does not include a list of supporters and opponents.
- 7) Requires the impartial analysis prepared by the Legislative Analyst's Office in the state voter information guide prepared by the SOS for the November 4, 2025, statewide special election called by this bill to include all of the following:
 - a) A hyperlink to the text of AB 604 (Aguiar-Curry and Gonzalez) of 2025.
 - b) One or more visual depictions of the geographic map or maps of the congressional districts that were certified by the Citizens Redistricting Commission in 2021.
 - c) One or more visual depictions of the geographic map or maps of the congressional districts that are created by AB 604.
- 8) Provides for the conduct of the November 4, 2025, statewide special election, as follows:
 - a) Polling Locations:
 - i) Provides the following for counties that conduct the special statewide election using the VCA:
 - (1) Permits counties to provide at least one vote center for every 60,000 registered voters within the county beginning October 25, 2025, and continuing daily up to and including October 31, 2025, for a minimum of eight hours per day at regular hours convenient for the public. For a county with fewer than 60,000 registered voters, a minimum of one vote center must be provided.
 - (2) At least one vote center must be provided for every 30,000 registered voters within the county, as determined by the most recent report of registration issued by the SOS, from November 1, 2025, to November 3, 2025, and on November 4, 2025, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. For counties with fewer than 30,000 registered voters, a minimum of one vote center must be provided.
 - ii) Provides the following for counties that do not conduct the special statewide election using the VCA:

- (1) Permits counties to provide one consolidated polling location for every 10,000 registered voters using specified criteria. These consolidated polling locations must be open from November 1, 2025, through November 3, 2025, for at least eight hours each day at the regular hours convenient for the public, and on November 4, 2025, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- (2) Requires counties using consolidated polling locations to provide at least one early voting polling location to be open during regular business hours not later than October 7, 2025. These early voting polling locations must allow voters to register to vote, update their voter registration, vote, return a VBM ballot, receive a provisional ballot, receive a replacement ballot, and vote using accessible voting equipment.
- (3) Requires county election officials to provide public notice of the proposed consolidated polling locations and ballot drop-off locations and accept public comments for at least 48 hours after providing notifications of these locations, as specified.

b) Ballot Drop-off Locations:

- i) Requires counties that do not conduct the special statewide election using the VCA to provide at least two VBM ballot drop-off locations within the county or at least one VBM ballot drop-off location for every 30,000 registered voters within the county, as determined by the last report of registration issued by the SOS, whichever results in more VBM ballot drop-off locations. For counties with fewer than 30,000 registered voters, at least one VBM ballot drop-off location must be provided.
 - ii) Requires counties that conduct the special statewide election using the VCA to provide at least two VBM ballot drop-off locations within the county or at least one VBM ballot drop-off location provided for every 15,000 registered voters within the county, as determined by the last report of registration issued by the SOS, whichever results in more VBM ballot drop-off locations.
 - iii) Requires a VBM ballot drop-off location to consist of a secure, accessible, and locked ballot box located as near as possible to established public transportation routes and that is able to receive voted ballots. All VBM ballot drop-off locations must be open at least during regular business hours beginning not later than October 7, 2025, through November 4, 2025. At least one VBM ballot drop-off location must be an accessible, secured, exterior drop box that is available for a minimum of 12 hours per day including regular business hours.
- c) Requires the SOS to establish a process to consider requests from counties to adjust or partially waive the minimally required number, location, or operational duration of consolidated polling locations, or to partially waive the requirements in existing law regarding the maximum number of voters in a precinct, as specified. This process includes, but is not limited to, review and modification, denial, or granting of a county's request in a timeframe determined by the SOS.

- d) Prohibits election officials from certifying the results of the November 4, 2025 statewide special election prior to the 28th calendar day following the election unless there are no more VBM ballots remaining where the voter has the opportunity to provide or verify their signature.
 - e) Requires election officials to accept a completed signature verification statement, unsigned identification envelope statement, or a combined VBM ballot signature verification statement until 5:00 p.m. on the 26th calendar day following the election. In cases where the only ballots left to count as part of the official canvass are VBM ballots for which a voter has the opportunity to either verify their signature or provide their signature, the official canvass does not have to be conducted at least six hours per day, as specified.
- 9) Declares that it is the intent of the Legislature to ensure counties have sufficient funding to effectuate the November 4, 2025, statewide special election and appropriates an amount, as determined by the Director of Finance, from the General Fund to conduct the November 4, 2025, statewide special election, as specified. Counties must report its final costs to administer the statewide special election to the SOS and the SOS must report the final costs to the Department of Finance and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.
- 10) Makes the following changes for the purposes of the June 2, 2026, statewide direct primary election and will be repealed on January 1, 2027. These changes will become operative only if ACA 8 takes effect and AB 604 become operative:
- a) Requires, for purposes of candidate nomination and filing procedures, SIL petitions to be made available beginning December 19, 2025, instead of December 11, 2025. Election officials must reduce the required number of signatures on a SIL petition by the same proportion as the reduction in the number of days for the candidate to gather signatures on such a petition compared to the number of days for a candidate to collect signatures on a petition.
 - b) Changes to Preelection Reports and Notices:
 - i) Requires the SOS to determine and publically announce not later than December 19, 2025, whether it is feasible to include the number of voters, by party preferences, in each congressional district in the state in the first statewide preelection report of registration that reflects the number of registered voters on the 154th day before the election. If the SOS determines that it is not feasible to include that information in the report of registration, then the following applies:
 - (1) Prepare the first preelection report of registration in accordance with existing law, but not include the number of voters by political party preferences in congressional districts located in whole or in part within the county.
 - (2) Prepare a supplemental report of registration containing the same information that is required to appear in reports of registration pursuant to

existing law with respect to all voters who are registered voters on a date specified by the SOS. The date specified by the SOS must be as soon as is feasible, as determined by the SOS, but not later than the 88th day before the June 2, 2026, statewide direct primary election.

- c) Requires the SOS to prepare a calendar of key dates, deadlines, and requirements for the nomination of candidates by the date that the SIL petition forms are made available.
- d) Prohibits a candidate for the office of Representative in Congress from choosing the word “incumbent” as a ballot designation.
- e) Provides that a person has until 5 p.m. on the 83rd day before the statewide direct primary election to file nomination documents for the office of Representative in Congress, if either of the following is true:
 - i) No person who currently holds the office of the Representative in Congress delivered nomination documents for that district by 5 p.m. on the 88th day before the statewide direct primary election.
 - ii) Every person who currently holds the office of the Representative in Congress who delivered nomination documents for that district by 5 p.m. on the 88th day before the direct primary election withdrew those nomination documents before 5 p.m. on the 88th day before the statewide direct primary election.

11) Contains an urgency clause and a severability clause.

BACKGROUND

Voter’s Choice Act. SB 450 (Allen), Chapter 832, Statutes of 2016, enacted the VCA and provided an additional model for counties to administer elections. This election model provides every registered voter a VBM ballot and allows a voter to visit any voting location, known as vote centers, within the voter’s county prior to and on Election Day to vote or seek assistance with voting.

As part of the VCA, for regularly scheduled elections, one vote center is required for every 50,000 registered voters and needs to be open from the 10th day to the 4th day prior to the election. One vote center needs to be open for every 10,000 registered voters from the 3rd day prior to the election through Election Day. A minimum of two vote centers are required in jurisdictions with a population below 50,000 and 10,000, respectively. For special elections, one vote center is required for every 60,000 registered voters from the 10th day to the day prior to the election, and one vote center for every 30,000 registered voters on Election Day.

Voters may visit any vote center in the voter’s county to return a VBM ballot, register to vote, and vote. Vote centers also need to be accessible to voters with disabilities and provide language assistance in a way consistent with current state and federal law. Finally, SB 450 required a VBM ballot drop-off location for every 15,000 registered voters and available from the 28th day before the election through Election Day.

Polling Place Counties. Existing law requires a precinct boundary to be fixed in a manner so that the number of voters in the precinct does not exceed 1,000 on the 88th day prior to Election Day, except as otherwise provided.

If certain conditions are met, election officials divide the territory within which the election is to be held into special election or consolidated election precincts by consolidating existing precincts. An elections official may change and alter the precincts for those elections as often as required. No more than six existing precincts may be consolidated into one special election or consolidated election precinct. The polling place used for a consolidated precinct must be located within the boundaries of the consolidated precinct.

Signature Curing. Under California law, election officials must verify a VBM ballot before it can be counted. This verification includes a comparison of the signature on the VBM ballot envelope with the signature(s) that are part of the voter's registration record to confirm that the voter who issued the VBM ballot is the voter who returned the ballot. Additionally, election officials are not required to certify election results on a specific day, but instead must certify results no later than a specified deadline. As a result, the deadline for a voter to complete this cure process varies from county-to-county, depending when each county certifies its election results.

When a voter's signature does not compare to the signature on file or the voter's signature is missing from the voter's VBM ballot envelope, the county elections official is required to mail a notice to the voter of the issue and how the voter can remedy or "cure" their ballot. Depending on the county, this results in two different forms. The voter is required to submit their signature verification statement or provide a signature no later than 5 p.m., two days prior to the certification of the election.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's Statement. California cannot stand idly by while Republicans rig the rules in Texas and other GOP states undermine fair representation in Congress, effectively silencing our state's voters.

The bill provides the necessary steps and funding to conduct a statewide special election on November 4 to allow the Legislature to redraw California's congressional districts if Texas and other GOP states pursue partisan gerrymanders to eliminate seats now held by Democrats. Following the 2030 Census, as already scheduled, the California Citizens Redistricting Commission would then redraw new congressional maps. SB 280 also makes changes to the June 2026 statewide primary that will go into effect if ACA 8 is approved by California voters and AB 604 becomes operative.

- 2) Redistricting Measures. This committee is hearing multiple measures relating to mid-decade redistricting of California's congressional districts. The California Constitution provides for the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, an independent redistricting commission tasked with creating district boundaries in the year following the national census for congressional, State Senatorial, Assembly, and Board of Equalization districts. One way to allow for new maps mid-decade is to

amend the California Constitution. ACA 8 proposes that new district maps be permitted and produced from the Legislature. Additionally, AB 604 describes these maps for California's allocation of 52 seats in the House of Representatives.

In order for the California Constitution to be amended, a proposal must be submitted to voters for their approval. This occurs at a statewide election. In order for a statewide election to take place this November, a bill is needed to waive deadlines and provide an appropriate solution for a condensed election timeline. This bill calls for the election and makes the necessary changes to the election timeline and the conduct of the election in order to hold a special statewide election on November 4, 2025.

- 3) Redistricting and the 2026 Primary Election Calendar. The special statewide election has the potential to conflict with the elections calendar for the June 2, 2026 statewide direct primary election. For example, existing law requires SIL petitions to be made available beginning 173 days before the election, or December 11, 2025. New congressional district boundaries may not be finalized by that date. If approved by voters, the provisions of Proposition 50 will not take effect until December 17, 2025, at the latest. As a result, the elections calendar would need to be adjusted to ensure that election officials have sufficient time to complete various administrative tasks in advance of the primary election, including implementing the new district boundaries.

This bill proposes a number of adjustments to the candidate nomination and filing process for the 2026 statewide direct primary election to accommodate the potential adoption of new congressional district lines. Because Proposition 50 is contingent on the actions of other states, the operative date might not be completely known if and when voters approve Proposition 50 and effectively adopting new district lines. This bill provides changes for potential scenarios relating to filing periods and reports. In particular, these changes will compress the SIL petition period. The delay in the adoption of district lines does not directly affect offices that are not elected by district (e.g., statewide or countywide office), for consistency this bill changes the SIL petition and nomination periods for all offices (federal, state, and local) that will appear on the ballot at the 2026 statewide direct primary election, except as specified.

- 4) Fiscal Comment. This bill appropriates an amount, as determined by the Director of Finance, from the General Fund for the SOS and counties to conduct the November 4, 2025, statewide special election. The bill also provides a reporting requirement on the final costs of the statewide special election that includes the total costs of the election by county, a breakdown of the costs for each county, and any funds remaining, by county, that can be used to offset state costs for the next election conducted by the county. This report would be due by April 1, 2026.

The previous special statewide election was a gubernatorial recall election held on September 14, 2021, and can serve as a guide to the total costs of this special election. According to a report on the costs of the gubernatorial recall election, the total statewide cost of the gubernatorial recall election was \$200,241,680, which includes \$174,059,031 in county costs and \$26,182,649 in SOS costs.

- 5) Support and Opposition. Communications of support and opposition received relate to mid-decade redistricting in general, and not to a specific measure within this legislative package. Supporters in general assert that this legislation is a needed response to the actions others states, specifically Texas, are taking at the urging of President Trump. They also point out that this legislation asks the voters of the state to decide on whether to approve new congressional districts, rather than politicians making the decision. Supporters further note that the legislation reaffirms California's support of independent redistricting commissions both here and nationwide.

Opponents' concerns center on the financial burden of the special election, the short timeframe for public comment on this legislative package, and that California's congressional delegation already includes relatively few Republican members. The League of Women Voters of California (LWV) notes that it stands "entirely apart from political parties on mid-cycle redistricting and squarely in the fight against President Trump's authoritarian and dangerous policies that threaten the civil rights and liberties of all Americans." The LWV here and in other states, however, opposes all attempts to gerrymander congressional lines on a partisan basis.

RELATED/PRIOR LEGISLATION

ACA 8 (Rivas and McGuire) of 2025 would, if approved by the voters, implement new congressional districts pursuant to AB 604 that could take effect as soon as the 2026 elections, if Texas or another state redistricts its congressional seats absent a court order to do so. These districts would remain in force until the 2032 election.

AB 604 (Aguiar-Curry and Gonzalez) of 2025 contains the legal descriptions of California congressional districts that would be adopted pursuant to ACA 8.

POSITIONS

Please see comment #5 for more details about support and opposition.

Support: AAPI Equity Alliance
 AFSCME California
 Alliance for a Better Community
 Altadena Chamber of Commerce
 Arab Resource & Organizing Center Action
 Asian American Drug Abuse Program
 Battleground California
 CA Church IMPACT
 CAUSE Action Fund
 California Donor Table
 California Federation of Labor Unions, AFL-CIO
 California Professional Firefighters
 California Teachers Association
 Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative
 Climate Action Campaign
 Democracy Strategy Partners
 Democratic Party of Orange County

Democratic Party of San Fernando Valley
Indivisible California: StateStrong (CASS)
Little Manila Rising
Los Angeles County Young Democrats
Outdoor Outreach
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Reproductive Freedom for All California
San Francisco Democratic Party
SEIU California
TruEvolution
UDW/AFSCME Local 3930
United Way Santa Cruz County
The Unity Council
Voices for Progress
WDN Action
Women's March Foundation
Thousands of individuals

Oppose: California Business Roundtable
California Consumer Advocates for Affordability and Safety
California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
California Manufacturers and Technology Association
Govern for California
Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce
Independent Voter Education
Independent Voter Project
NFIB
Protect the Voters FIRST Act
Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce
The Two Hundred for Homeownership
United Latinos Action
Unity Party of California
Thousands of individuals

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