

Date of Hearing: August 20, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 280 (Cervantes) – As Amended August 18, 2025

Policy Committee: Elections

Vote: 5-2

Urgency: Yes

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill calls a statewide special election on November 4, 2025 (2025 special election) and requires ACA 8 (Rivas), of the 2025-26 Legislative Session, be submitted to voters at that election as Proposition 50. This bill also appropriates funds to effectuate the 2025 special election and provides certain requirements for the administration of the 2025 special election and the June 2, 2026, statewide direct primary election (2026 primary election).

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to make forms for securing signatures on an in-lieu-filing-fee petition for the 2026 primary election available beginning December 19, 2025. A local elections official must reduce the required number of signatures on the petition by the same proportion as the reduction in the number of days the candidate has to collect signatures.
- 2) If the SOS determines by December 19, 2025, it is not feasible to update a statewide list to include specified information about registered voters in each congressional district by the 154th day before the 2026 primary election, requires the SOS to instead prepare a supplemental statewide list with such information as soon as feasible, but no later than the 88th day before the 2026 primary election. A local elections official must prepare certain information for the supplemental statewide list by a date to be specified by the SOS.
- 3) Requires the SOS prepare a calendar of key election dates and deadlines and candidate nomination and election requirements for the 2026 primary election by December 19, 2025.
- 4) Prohibits a congressional candidate from choosing the word “incumbent” as their ballot designation for the 2026 primary election and makes related changes to candidate filing deadlines if the maps created by AB 604 (Aguiar-Curry), of the 2025-26 Legislative Session, become operative.
- 5) Calls a special statewide election to be held on November 4, 2025, and requires the submission of Proposition 50 to voters at that special election. A local election called on or before August 8, 2025, and scheduled to be held on November 4, 2025, may be consolidated with the statewide special election.

- 6) Requires the impartial analysis of Proposition 50 prepared by the Legislative Analyst for the state voter guide to include visual depictions of the 2021 congressional district maps and the AB 604 maps.
- 7) Provides certain procedures the SOS and local elections officials must follow for the 2025 special election regarding the translation of ballot materials, examination of the condensed ballot title and summary, availability of vote by mail ballot drop-off locations and vote centers, consolidation of precinct boards, certification of results, and curing of signatures.
- 8) Declares the intent of the Legislature to ensure counties have sufficient funding to effectuate the 2025 special election and appropriates an amount from the General Fund (GF) to the State Controller for the actual and reasonably necessary costs for counties to conduct the special election, as determined by the Department of Finance (DOF) director.
- 9) Appropriates an amount from the GF to the SOS for the actual and reasonably necessary costs to the SOS to administer the special election, as determined by the DOF director, and requires the SOS to report, by April 1, 2026, the final costs of the 2025 special election to the DOF director and Joint Legislative Budget Committee.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Costs of unknown amount, likely in the low hundreds of millions of dollars, to the state to appropriate upfront payments to counties and the SOS for administration of the 2025 special election (GF). For reference, pursuant to AB 128 (Ting), Chapter 21, Statutes of 2021, and SB 152 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 34, Statutes of 2021, DOF allocated approximately \$243.6 million to the state's 58 counties and \$35 million to the SOS to conduct the 2021 gubernatorial recall election.
- 2) Costs of an unknown amount to the SOS for workload related to the 2026 primary election (GF). The magnitude of such costs depend on whether the AB 604 maps become operative. Related costs to local elections officials are likely non-reimbursable by the state because such workload would result from a voter-approved state initiative.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

California cannot stand idly by while Republicans rig the rules in Texas and other GOP states to undermine fair representation in Congress and silence our state's voters.

[SB 280] 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.

- 2) **Background. Redistricting.** Redistricting is the process by which a governmental body's district boundaries are adjusted. Redistricting generally occurs at the beginning of each decade following the decennial federal census to ensure the population of each district remains roughly equal.

Proposition 11 (2008) created the California Redistricting Commission (CRC) to draw district lines for the state Senate, Assembly, and Board of Equalization. Proposition 20 (2010) expanded the CRC's duties to include drawing congressional district lines. Under current law, the districts most recently drawn by the CRC after the 2020 census are scheduled to remain in place until the CRC adopts new maps following the 2030 census, with new district maps taking effect in 2032.

Elections Administration. This bill calls a statewide special election on November 4, 2025, and requires ACA 8 be submitted to voters at that election as Proposition 50. If this bill is signed into law, a local elections official will have a short timeframe to prepare for the election. In order to accommodate the condensed timeframe, this bill proposes certain adjustments to the conduct of the 2025 special election that are similar to previous legislation calling for statewide special elections, such as SB 152 for the 2021 gubernatorial recall election. This bill also appropriates funds to counties and the SOS for the actual and reasonably necessary costs to administer the special election.

If voters approve Proposition 50, and if another state voluntarily conducts mid-decade congressional redistricting, the congressional district maps specified in AB 604 become operative. The use of such maps and the calendaring of the 2025 special election so close to the 2026 primary election present challenges for the administration of the 2026 primary election. Accordingly, this bill proposes certain adjustments to the administration of the 2026 primary election.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 604 (Aguiar-Curry) specifies the boundaries for California's congressional districts that would take effect if voters approve ACA 8 and if another state voluntarily conducts mid-decade congressional redistricting. AB 604 is pending hearing by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

ACA 8 (Rivas), if approved by voters, requires the state to temporarily use certain new congressional district maps for each congressional election if another state voluntarily conducts mid-decade congressional redistricting. ACA 8 is pending hearing by this committee.