

## SENATE THIRD READING

STR Bill Id:SB 280 Author:(Cervantes and Pellerin)

As Amended Ver:August 18, 2025

2/3 vote. Urgency

**SUMMARY**

Calls a statewide special election to be held on November 4, 2025 (2025 special election), and requires ACA 8 (Rivas and McGuire) of the current legislative session to be submitted to the voters at that election. Specifies procedures for conducting the 2025 special election.

Appropriates funds from the General Fund (GF) to the Secretary of State (SOS) and to counties for 2025 special election costs. Makes various changes to state law governing candidate filing for the June 2, 2026, statewide primary election (2026 primary election).

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Calls the 2025 special election to be held on November 4, 2025, requires the SOS to submit ACA 8 (Rivas and McGuire) of the current legislative session to the voters at that election, and requires ACA 8 to be designated as Proposition 50 on the ballot. Authorizes a local election called on or before August 8, 2025, and scheduled to be held on November 4, 2025, to be consolidated with the statewide special election.
- 2) 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 congressional maps created by AB 604 (Aguiar-Curry and Lena Gonzalez) of the current legislative session.
- 3) 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, certification of results, and curing of signatures. Permits a county to make adjustments to in-person voting requirements for the purposes of the 2025 special election, as specified.
- 4) Declares the intent of the Legislature to ensure counties have sufficient funding to effectuate the 2025 special election. Appropriates an amount from the GF to the Controller for the actual and reasonably necessary costs, as determined by the Department of Finance (DOF) director, for the counties to conduct the 2025 special election, and appropriates an amount from the GF to the SOS for the actual and reasonably necessary costs, as determined by the DOF director, for the SOS to administer the 2025 special election.
- 5) Requires the SOS to make forms for securing signatures on an in-lieu-filing-fee petition (SIL petition) for the 2026 primary election available beginning December 19, 2025, and requires a local elections official to reduce the required number of signatures on the SIL petition by the same proportion as the reduction in the number of days the candidate has to collect signatures.
- 6) Requires the SOS to prepare a calendar of key election dates and deadlines and candidate nomination and election requirements for the 2026 primary election by December 19, 2025.
- 7) 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 and Lena Gonzalez), of the current legislative session, become operative.

- 8) Contains a severability clause, and contains an urgency clause, allowing this bill to take effect immediately upon enactment.

## COMMENTS

If this bill is signed into law, a county elections official will have a short timeframe to prepare for the 2025 special election. In order to accommodate the condensed timeframe, this bill proposes adjustments to the conduct of the statewide special election that are similar to previous bills calling statewide special elections. For instance, this bill provides counties with the option to choose to provide reduced in-person voting locations in lieu of the procedures for in-person voting that would otherwise be applicable in that county under existing law. These are similar to provisions that were included in SB 152 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 34, Statutes of 2021, which established procedures for the conduct of the 2021 gubernatorial recall election.

If this bill is signed into law, the elections calendar for the 2025 special election may create conflicts with the 2026 primary election calendar. For example, existing law requires SIL petitions to be made available beginning 173 days before the election, or December 11, 2025. That date falls before the statutory deadline for the SOS to issue final election results for the 2025 special election. To ensure that the results of the 2025 special election are clear when the candidate filing process begins for the 2026 primary election, this bill proposes adjustments to the candidate filing process. The changes this bill proposes are similar to changes that SB 594 (Glazer), Chapter 320, Statutes of 2021, made to state law governing candidate filing for the 2022 statewide primary election due to COVID-related delays in the release of census data and the adoption of new district lines by the CRC.

Please see the policy committee analysis for a full discussion of this bill.

### 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. Senate Bill 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.

"SB 280 also makes changes to the June 2026 statewide primary that will go into effect if Assembly Constitutional Amendment 8 is approved by California voters and Assembly Bill 604 becomes operative."

### Arguments in Support

In support of this bill, Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, writes: "At President Trump's urging, Texas Republicans plan to redraw their Congressional district map in an unprecedented attempt to 'rig' the election in their favor before voting even begins. This dangerous election gaming puts politics over people and California must fight back. This is California's opportunity to 'check' the Trump administration's abuses of power to restrict civil rights and attack individual

freedoms. SB 280 makes necessary changes that will allow California elections officials to administer the special election on November 4, and give voters time to review and vote on the state's proposal to redraw its own maps in response to gerrymandering in other states."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

In opposition to this bill, California Common Cause, writes: "The changes to the Elections Code proposed in SB 280 would hinder full voter participation, with likely disproportionate harm falling to already underrepresented Californians. In particular, we are opposed to the following election administration rollbacks in SB 280:

"1. Reduced in-person voting: By reducing the required number of in-person voting locations, as well as early voting options, this bill would undermine voting rights that California has worked hard to establish. Many underrepresented communities prefer to or need to vote in person, and we cannot allow those voters to be left behind in this election.

"2. Reduced opportunity for public input: SB 280 requires the Secretary of State to translate the proposed ballot measure into all required languages, but it removes the requirement to consult the state's established panel of language experts. It also provides only eight days for public examination of the translations and minimal opportunity to seek amendments for translation errors.

"3. Potentially insufficient funding: The provisions of SB 280 providing funding for the proposed November 4th election are crafted so narrowly, including with a requirement that excess funding be tracked and rolled over to future elections, that they may be read not to include the ample voter outreach and education needed to ensure fair and representative turnout."

### **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 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.

### **VOTES**

**SENATE FLOOR: Vote not relevant**

**YES:**

**ABS, ABST OR NV:**

**ASM ELECTIONS: Vote not relevant**

**YES:**

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: Vote not relevant**

**YES:**

**ABS, ABST OR NV:**

**ASM ELECTIONS: 5-2-0**

**YES:** Pellerin, Bennett, Berman, Solache, Stefani

**NO:** Macedo, Tangipa

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0**

**YES:** Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

**NO:** Dixon, Jeff Gonzalez, Ta, Tangipa

**UPDATED**

VERSION: August 18, 2025

CONSULTANT: Nichole Becker / ELECTIONS / (916) 319-2094

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