

Date of Hearing: August 20, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 316 (Reyes) – As Amended July 17, 2025

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| Policy Committee: | Education | Vote: | 9 - 0 |
| | Elections | | 5 - 1 |

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires, beginning with the 2026-27 school year, the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, a state special school, and the governing body of a charter school to ensure each of its pupils receives, at least once before completing grade 11, information on how to properly preregister to vote and register to vote.

The bill provides a governing board or body with the discretion to determine how to disseminate required information regarding voter registration to students.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund costs of unknown but potentially significant amount, likely in the tens of thousands to low hundreds of thousands of dollars each year for local educational agency (LEA) governing boards and bodies to ensure that students receive information on how to pre-register, and register, to vote. According to the California Department of Education, the three state special schools alone would incur ongoing annual cumulative costs of \$60,000 per year to support the additional administrative work and a contract with two third-party nonprofit organizations. To the extent LEAs are already meeting the requirements of this bill through their offerings during high school voter education weeks under existing law, costs would be lower.

If the Commission on State Mandates determines the bill's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs to LEAs or provide funding through the K-12 Mandate Block Grant.

COMMENTS:

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

SB 316 would provide high school students in California the opportunity and resources needed to pre-register to vote by the end of their eleventh grade. Sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds in California have the ability to pre-register to vote and subsequently become registered to vote upon their 18th birthday. However, currently only 11% of sixteen and seventeen-year-olds in California are actually pre-registered to vote. This bill would address the low voter pre-registration rate in California by presenting high school students the

opportunity and resources needed to pre-register to vote at their schools.

- 2) **Background. *Student Voter Registration.*** Established in 2014, voter pre-registration allows 16 and 17 year olds to pre-register to vote and have their registration become active once they turn 18 years old. Additionally, the Student Voter Registration Project (SVRP), established in 2003, requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to provide every high school, community college, California State University, and University of California campus with voter registration forms, and include information regarding eligibility requirements and informing each student that they may return the completed form in person or by mail to the elections official of the county in which the student resides.

According to the SOS, since pre-registration began in 2016, a total of 1,319,931 students have pre-registered to vote. Of these, 1,029,492 have since turned 18 and are now registered to vote. In 2023, the SOS contacted 3,878 high schools and 154 colleges and universities through the SVRP. A total of 513 schools responded to the mailing, which represents a 13% response rate, despite being required by Elections Code. Of the schools that responded, only 328 requested paper voter registration forms.

High School Voter Education Weeks. Current law designates the last two full weeks of April and September as “High School Voter Education Weeks” during which the SOS, in partnership with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, issues a joint letter encouraging high school administrators, staff, and students to host voter registration drives and to participate in educational events all year but especially during these four weeks. This year, the SOS visited high schools and colleges across the state, holding in-person voter education forums and attending college fairs. The SOS also encouraged eligible high school students to engage in the election process by serving as poll workers and celebrating civic holidays such as Poll Worker Recruitment Day. The SOS has created targeted outreach material to support civic engagement participation and shared these materials with high school campuses.

- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 2724 (Reyes), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, was substantially similar to this bill and was vetoed by the Governor citing concerns with creating an additional mandate on schools for something they already have the ability to fulfill under current law.

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