

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 715 (Allen) – As Amended June 11, 2026

Policy Committee: Elections

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill shortens the deadline by which the Secretary of State (SOS) must notify candidates for an office of all other candidates for the same office.

Specifically, this bill shortens the deadline by five days, requiring the SOS to notify the candidates for a partisan or voter-nominated office of the names, addresses, offices, occupations, and party preferences of all other candidates for the same office at least 78 days before the election, instead of at least 73 days before the election (or at least 10 days, instead of at least five days, before the SOS transmits the certified list of candidates to the county elections official).

FISCAL EFFECT:

Costs of an unknown, but likely significant amount, in excess of \$150,000, to the SOS in additional staff workload and operational risks to provide the notice to candidates five days earlier during the primary and general election periods for each statewide election cycle (General Fund). In addition to staff overtime costs to meet the accelerated deadline, this bill may also lead to oversights during the candidate verification process, resulting in subsequent staff workload to resolve issues, as well as potential legal challenges.

For its part, the SOS estimates minimum costs of approximately \$18,000 each even-numbered year, unless a special election occurs, in additional staff overtime. The SOS notes that staff already routinely work substantial overtime during the candidate filing period to ensure all legal requirements are met. During the June 2, 2026, primary election, staff worked more than 650 hours of overtime over approximately two months to meet existing statutory deadlines. The SOS generally concludes that this bill's timelines are infeasible and would significantly compress the period available for staff to receive, review, verify, and process candidate filing documents; resolve filing and ballot designation issues with candidates and county elections officials; and prepare and distribute the notice to candidates.

COMMENTS:

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

Under existing law, the [SOS] must transmit the certified list of candidates, along with their ballot designations, to county elections officials 68 days before the election. The [SOS] also provides the list to all candidates 73 days before the election which affords candidates

the opportunity to issue legal challenges against any information they believe is inaccurate or may mislead voters.

With the existing deadlines, candidates have only five days to review designations and file legal challenges before the list is officially certified on the 68th day before an election. Additionally, the deadline for the list to be provided to the candidates always falls on a Saturday which further limits the ability to process challenges during traditional business hours.

SB 715 addresses this issue by moving the deadline for providing the list to candidates to 78 days before the election. This five-day extension gives candidates a more reasonable opportunity to identify inaccuracies and pursue challenges.

- 2) **Background. *Ballot Designations.*** A candidate must file a ballot designation worksheet along with other filing documents to have the candidate's profession appear on the ballot under the candidate's name. The SOS has final approval of ballot designations for state and federal candidates and county elections officials have such jurisdiction over local candidates. If the ballot designation requested by a candidate does not comply with the law, the elections official will notify the candidate, who has three business days to provide an alternative designation. Existing law also allows an elector to challenge the validity of a candidate's ballot designation by seeking a writ of mandate.

Election Deadlines. The candidate filing period starts 113 days before the election and the filing deadline is generally 88 days before the election. Such filing documents must be verified by the elections official within a very short period. Existing law requires the SOS to complete its verification process 73 days before the election, which is also the deadline for the SOS to provide notice to a candidate of the names, ballot designations, and other information for all the other candidates running for the same office. The SOS must then release the final certified list of candidates 68 days before the election. This bill shifts the deadline that includes the release of ballot designation information to 78 days before the election. As noted in the Assembly Elections Committee's analysis of this bill:

If this bill is signed into law, the SOS will have less time to verify candidate filings. It is unclear whether it is feasible to cut the amount of time that the SOS has to prepare the notice to candidates after the candidate filing deadline. Additionally, changing one deadline on the election calendar will affect every other deadline in the election process.