
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 715
Author: Allen (D)
Amended: 8/20/26
Vote: 21

SENATE HOUSING COMMITTEE: 9-1, 4/29/25

AYES: Wahab, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez,
Grayson, Padilla

NOES: Ochoa Bogh

NO VOTE RECORDED: Seyarto

SENATE FLOOR: 27-8, 5/28/25

AYES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon,
Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Gonzalez, Grayson, Hurtado, Laird, Limón,
McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-
Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson

NOES: Alvarado-Gil, Grove, Jones, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Seyarto, Strickland,
Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Choi, Dahle, Durazo, Reyes, Valladares

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 8/30/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Elections

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill provides more time to challenge a candidate's ballot designation by making numerous changes to the calendar deadlines that precede an election. This bill also requires candidates to certify under penalty of perjury to the truth and accuracy of their ballot designations.

Assembly Amendments delete the contents of the bill as passed by the Senate and replace them with the current provisions related to candidate ballot designations.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to place the name of a candidate seeking the nomination of a qualified political party for the office of President on the presidential primary ballot when the SOS makes a certain determination. The SOS must announce these candidates on or before the 88th day preceding a presidential primary election.
- 2) Requires a candidate to file specified documents to appear on the ballot for a primary, municipal, or district election. Forms to file these documents must be available on the 113th day prior to the election and must be returned to the elections official no later than the 88th day prior to the election or no later than the 83rd day when an incumbent eligible to run for re-election does not file to run.
- 3) Requires a candidate when filing their declaration of candidacy to submit a ballot designation worksheet to support the candidate's expressed ballot designation.
- 4) Permits an elections official to reject a ballot designation that does not comply with state law.
- 5) Allows an elector to challenge a candidate's ballot designation by seeking a writ of mandate.
- 6) Requires the SOS, at least 68 days before a primary or general election, to transmit to each county elections official a certified list of candidates who are eligible to appear on that county's ballots. The certified list must include the name, office, party preference as appropriate, and ballot designation of each candidate. The SOS, at least five days before transmitting the list, must notify each candidate of the names, addresses, offices, occupations (for which the SOS uses ballot designations), and party preferences of all other persons who have filed to run for the same office.

This bill:

- 1) Adjusts the elections calendar to provide additional time to challenge a candidate's ballot designation by:
 - a) Requiring the SOS to announce presidential primary candidates on or before the 95th day, rather than 88th, preceding a presidential primary election.

- b) Providing that documents to file as a candidate for a primary, municipal, or district election must first be available on the 120th day, rather than the 113th day, before the election, and must be returned to the elections official no later than the 95th day, rather than the 88th, prior to the election.
 - c) Requiring the SOS to notify candidates of other candidates for the same office at least 10 days, rather than five, prior to transmitting the certified list of candidates to county elections officials, so at least 78 days prior to the elections, rather than 68 days.
 - d) Making conforming changes to various time periods for elections administration to add several days, including the deadlines for adjusting the boundaries of districts, submitting candidate statements for voter information guides; conducting the randomized alphabet drawing; extending filing periods when an eligible incumbent does not file for re-election; adjusting the filing period for party central committee candidates; and adjusting the applicable dates for scheduling special elections.
- 2) Requires a candidate to certify under penalty of perjury to the truth and accuracy of the content of their ballot designation worksheet.
 - 3) Avoids chaptering out SB 1429 (Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments, Chapter 114, Statutes of 2026) by permitting a local jurisdiction to file a resolution to consolidate its elections with a statewide election with only the elections official if, at least 95 days before the date of the election, either of the following requirements are met:
 - a) The elections official provides the resolution to the board of supervisors.
 - b) The board of supervisors authorizes the elections official to receive resolutions and consolidate elections without seeking new approval by the board of supervisors for each election.
 - 4) Includes language to ensure that it will not chapter out SB 1360 (Cervantes) of 2026, should both bills become law this year.

Background

Existing law allows candidates to have a ballot designation of up to three words denoting their current or recent profession, vocation, or occupation, including the word “incumbent” when running for re-election. When requesting a ballot designation, a candidate must file a ballot designation worksheet that supports the use of that ballot designation. The SOS has final approval of ballot designations for

state and federal candidates and county election officials have jurisdiction over local candidates. If a ballot designation does not comply with the law, the SOS or the local elections official notifies the candidate, who then has three days to provide an alternative ballot designation.

Additionally, current law permits any elector to challenge the validity of a candidate's ballot designation by seeking a writ of mandate. The court must place this ahead of other civil matters on its calendar so that it may issue a decision quickly and not interfere with the conduct of the election.

Under existing law, the candidate filing period starts 113 days before the election and ends 88 days before the election. To appear on the ballot during this time, a candidate must submit a declaration of candidacy and supporting documents, which election officials then verify to ensure compliance with state law. This verification process must be completed within a very short time. For instance, the SOS must complete its verification process 73 days before Election Day, which is the deadline for the SOS to provide notice to candidates of the ballot designations of other candidates seeking the same office. Subsequently, not less than 68 days before Election Day, the SOS must release the final certified list of candidates. It is during this five-day period, 73 to 68 days before the election, that another candidate or other elector would challenge a ballot designation in court.

Comments

- 1) *Author's Statement.* The names of candidates for elected office appear on the ballot alongside a ballot designation that the candidate has chosen to describe their current occupation or employment to inform voters of their professional background. 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.

This bill addresses this issue by moving up candidate filing deadlines in order to provide the list to candidates 78 days before the election and by requiring

candidates to attest under penalty of perjury to the truth and accuracy of their ballot designations. This deadline change will give candidates a more reasonable opportunity to identify inaccuracies in ballot designations and pursue challenges.

- 2) *Major Adjustment to the Elections Calendar.* This bill was recently amended to make numerous changes related to the longstanding calendar for nominating candidates for elective office in California. In essence, the bill adds a week of time to that schedule for every action required of candidates and election officials up to the point when the list of candidates and their ballot designations become finalized. Because this bill has been in print for a short period of time, it is likely that many who may have concerns about these adjustments to the calendar have had insufficient time to become aware of and submit comments about these changes. It is likely that this bill will need cleanup legislation and lead to possible confusion during future election cycles.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/31/26)

None received

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/31/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 8/30/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Johnson, Kalra, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Calderon, Flora, Jackson, Krell

Prepared by: Carrie Cornwell / E. & C.A. / (916) 651-4106
8/31/26 9:51:13

**** **END** ****