



Senator Melissa Hurtado

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 14

Senate Bill 207

Expand Voter Access to Primaries

As Amended January 23, 2020

SUMMARY

SB 207 would simplify the process for voters updating specified personal information or party preference in the two weeks prior to and including Election Day.

BACKGROUND

The 2016 presidential primary highlighted various issues faced by election officials and voters in navigating California's electoral process.

For instance, registered voters with No Party Preference (NPP) faced obstacles in obtaining ballots with partisan candidates on them. For those wishing to vote for Republican candidates or another political party that opted to be a closed primary, they learned they had to re-register.

For those wishing to vote for a Democratic candidate or other candidate from a political party opting to allow NPP participation, voters learned they needed to specifically request the applicable partisan ballot.

For vote-by-mail voters, this meant sending back a postcard well in advance of the election requesting the partisan ballot, or having to go to a poll on Election Day to exchange their nonpartisan mail ballot for a partisan ballot.

As of October 2019, 26.7% of registered voters were registered as No Party Preference, an increase from 24% in 2016. Over 63% of

Californians are registered as permanent vote by mail voters, and even more will be voting by mail who live in counties opting to participate in the Voter's Choice Act.

SB 72 (Umberg 2019) requires all polling locations to offer same-day registration. Previously, in many counties voters wishing to register to vote on Election Day would have needed to go to the office for their election official. Counties operating mail-ballot elections under the Voter's Choice Act already offer same-day registration at vote centers.

While the passage of SB 72 expanded access to this process and thus will have positive impacts for individuals who are not yet registered or need to make changes to their registration, it also poses the potential for polling locations to be inundated by same day registration requests.

Local election officials are anticipating high numbers of voters needing to update either their address within the county due to recent moves, or their party registration in order to vote for their preferred candidate under the presidential primary rules, on Election Day.

Voters wishing to make even these simple changes will have to deal with long lines to check in on the roster, obtain and complete a registration form and provisional envelope, then have their forms reviewed, and receive a provisional ballot before even voting. This



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process slows down voting for other voters, and impacts election officials who spend additional time and resources counting the increased number of provisional ballots.

SOLUTION

SB 207 would streamline the process for voters updating their address within the same county or political party preference in the period between the 14th day preceding Election Day until the close of polls on Election Day.

This change would:

- Reduce wait times at polls. Currently, to make updates to address and political party preference at a polling location requires a new registration, which takes time to fill out completely due to the amount of information required. The simpler form would help voters complete the process faster, reducing the time a voter needs to be absent from work or other obligations and the potential frustrations created by backlogs.
- Reduce the number of provisional ballots expected to be issued. Voters would be allowed to vote on a non-provisional ballot only

if the location can accurately verify the voter, their appropriate ballot, and that they have not already cast a ballot. If the polling location or vote center cannot verify these criteria, the voter would still be issued a provisional ballot.

- Reduce backlog during the canvass period.

SUPPORT

California Secretary of State Alex Padilla (sponsor)

American Civil Liberties Union
California Association of Clerks and Election Officials
California Voter Foundation
League of Women Voters of California
Next Gen California

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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