

OFFICERS 2006-2008

STEVE WEIR
PRESIDENT
Contra Costa County
524 Main Street
Martinez, CA 94553
(925) 646-2955
sweir@cr.cccounty.us

REBECCA MARTINEZ
VICE PRESIDENT
Madera County

GAIL PELLERIN
TREASURER
Santa Cruz County

CATHY DARLING
SECRETARY
Shasta County

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

APPOINTED:

JANICE ATKINSON
Sonoma County
DARLENE BLOOM
Orange County
CANDACE GRUBBS
Butte County
JOSEPH HOLLAND
Santa Barbara County
NEAL KELLEY
Orange County
DEAN LOGAN
Los Angeles County
JOHN MCKIBBEN
Los Angeles County
KATHIE MORAN
Colusa County
DOLORES PROVENCIO
Imperial County
ELMA ROSAS
Santa Clara County
KAY VINSON*
City Clerk, Murrieta
* non-voting member

ELECTED:

JULIE BUSTAMANTE
Northern Area
Lassen County
BARBARA DUNMORE
Southern Area
Riverside County
CANDY LOPEZ
Bay Area
Contra Costa County
LEE LUNDRIGAN
Central Area
Stanislaus County
JIM MCCAULEY
Mother Lode Area
Placer County

ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONNOR MCCORMACK
Los Angeles County
MARSHA WHARFF
Mendocino County

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

CLERK OF THE BOARD:

SACHI A. HAMAI
Los Angeles County

COUNTY CLERK:

KATHIE MORAN
Colusa County
VICKI PETERSEN
Sonoma County

ELECTIONS:

JILL LAVINE
Sacramento County
DEBORAH SEILER
Solano County



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CLERKS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

April 11, 2007

Assembly Member Mullin
Assembly Member Leno
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Members Mullin and Leno:

The Elections Legislative Committee of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials met on April 6, 2007, and reviewed **AB 1294** (as introduced, February 23, 2007), your proposed legislation allowing ranked choice voting methods for use by local jurisdictions.

Ranked choice voting (also known as instant run-off voting) utilizes a vote tabulating procedure whereby, if a candidate (in a single office contest) does not receive a majority of the votes cast, the ballots cast for the candidate with the least number of votes are redistributed to the second choice candidates. This process continues until a candidate receives a majority of the votes cast. Most local jurisdictions do not have run-off elections, and officeholders are elected by a plurality. Therefore, while the outcome of an election may be different under this form of voting, the jurisdiction would be paying for a very expensive method of voting, and there would be no offsetting cost reductions.

This process becomes even more complex when extended to include multi-office contests. Because voters may vote for one or more candidates, receiving a majority of votes cast is not possible for multiple candidates. The voting system must then transform into "choice voting" (also known as single transferable vote). This system uses a formula to arrive at a minimum threshold of votes required for election. Candidates reaching that threshold are considered elected, and the votes cast for second choice candidates are distributed to other candidates by a "transfer value" based on the number of votes the first choice candidate received in excess of the minimum threshold.

Though the Committee to take no position on the bill at this time, the following concerns were raised:

- There are currently no voting systems certified for use in the State of California that can accommodate alternative forms of voting. Though one voting system was conditionally certified for use in an alternative voting method election, most voting systems cannot accommodate such methods of voting. The one system that was certified only tabulated single office contests.
- County election officials are obligated to administer elections for school and special districts, and administer many elections on behalf of cities. Many of these elections are consolidated with statewide elections. Allowing local jurisdictions the option of conducting elections by ranked choice would obligate counties financially and force the acquisition of new voting equipment (that does not exist at this writing).
- Alternative voting methods add another layer of complexity to the administration of elections and, due to the highly complex computer programs required to tabulate such votes, force counties to be totally reliant on vendors for the tabulation of votes cast. It would not be possible for independent verification of the election results, including the 1% manual tally that is performed as part of the canvass of votes.

- These forms of voting are confusing to voters, particularly in consolidated elections, where most contests would be tabulated using the regular voting method and others by ranked choice, and possibly others by choice voting.
- None of the calculations needed to determine the majority or the threshold can be made until all absentee and provisional votes are counted, further delaying election results, and jeopardizing the counties' ability to meet statutory canvass deadlines.

Should you or your staff have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at (707) 565-1876.

Very truly yours,

Janice Atkinson,
Correspondence Secretary
California Association of
Clerks and Election Officials

c: Senator Ron Calderon, Chair, Elections, Reapportionment and Constitutional Amendments Committee
Assembly Member Curren Price, Chair, Committee on Elections and Redistricting
Deborah Seiler, Co-Chair, CACEO Elections Legislative Committee
Jill Lavine, Co-Chair, CACEO Elections Legislative Committee