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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CLERKS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

NEAL KELLEY, PRESIDENT

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July 9, 2015

The Honorable Sebastian Ridley-Thomas
Chairman, Assembly Committee on
Elections and Redistricting
State Capitol, Room 2176
Sacramento, CA 95814

SB 450 (ALLEN) –SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Ridley-Thomas:

The California Association of Clerks and Elections Officials would like to inform you that it has taken a position of SUPPORT for Senate Bill 450. Although several concerns remain unresolved, the Association is very appreciative of the collaborative approach that the author and the Secretary of State have taken in drafting this bill and researching the proposed voting model. This support position is predicated on the assumption of continued collaboration and dialogue to refine the bill.

We recognize and appreciate the desire of the author and the Secretary to leverage the current interest in reforming elections in an attempt to reverse the dismal rates of voter participation in the state. However, this is an overall dramatic and fundamental alteration of California's voting processes and institutions. The Association is concerned that, in the haste to do something, the result may not effectively realize the spirit and intent of the bill without further refinement.

We strongly encourage continuing dialogue and collaboration on some key concerns:

Election administration is a complex public service impacted by myriad factors. To best achieve the goals of this bill, election administrators need the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions and to function in an agile manner. That flexibility is highly dependent on a functional and flexible regulatory framework both in statute and in administrative rules under the authority of the Secretary of State. We are concerned that these have not yet been sufficiently addressed in the bill language.

The expectations of this bill include increased rates of voter participation and a reduction in the costs of election administration. However, some counties estimate significant up-front investment costs to implement the provisions of this bill. We are concerned that, although some counties may be well positioned to make these investments, without a funding mechanism not all counties will be able to afford to opt-in to this voting model at this time, preventing us from realizing all the benefits that could be achieved. Furthermore, while the opt-in approach offers flexibility for

counties, it relieves the state from any funding obligations and may also be a disincentive for the full engagement of stakeholders in ensuring the success of the implementation.

The Association is excited by the interest in modernizing the election paradigm in California and is optimistic about the future and the potential benefits this bill offers the voters of the state. We are particularly pleased with the improvement in voting opportunities this bill provides for voters with disabilities. We believe this bill represents the broadest expansion of options for voters with disabilities of any proposed state elections legislation in many years. The Association looks forward to continuing the dialogue on SB 450 to ensure that the best possible statutory framework for this voting model is realized.

Should you have questions regarding our position, please contact Joe Holland, Santa Barbara County Clerk-Recorder-Assessor at Holland@co.santa-barbara.ca.us (805) 568-2575 or Jill LaVine, Sacramento County Registrar of Voters at lavinej@saccounty.net (916) 875-6060.

Respectfully,



Scott O. Konopasek
Corresponding Secretary
California Association of Clerks and Election Officials

Cc: Senator Ben Allen, Chair, Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee
Ethan Jones, Chief Consultant, Assembly Committee on Elections and Redistricting
Daryl Thomas, Republican Caucus Consultant
Barry Brokaw, Sacramento Advocates, Inc.
Jill LaVine, Co-Chair, CACEO Election Legislative Committee
Karen Rhea, Co-Chair, CACEO Election Legislative Committee