

Senator Alex Padilla

Fact Sheet



SB 361– PADILLA

Voter Registration Modernization (03/14/2013)

Summary

SB 361 would improve and modernize California's voter registration and increase access to election information.

Background

Complete and accurate voter registration records are essential to the integrity of the electoral process and the legitimacy of results. Voter records are used to assign precincts, send sample ballots, provide polling place information, identify and verify voters at polling places, and determine how resources, such as paper ballots and voting machines, are deployed on Election Day.

California's Election Performance

For decades California has been a leader in protecting the right to vote. However, we have fallen behind other states in terms of innovative election reforms that expand voter participation in elections. Millions of Californians do not vote and hundreds of thousands that do vote experience problems. In 2010, California had 23.5 million eligible voters, of those:

- 17.2 million were registered to vote
- 10.5 million voted
- 6 million were eligible to vote but not registered
- 5 million were registered but didn't vote

- 1.6 million reported voter registration problems
- 200,000 were unable to vote because of registration problems
- 546,000 voted provisionally because of registration problems
- 258,000 had parts or all of their provisional or absentee ballot rejected

California has more people that do not vote than the total number of voters in Texas and New York combined. The total number of provisional and absentee ballots rejected in California is greater than the total number of voters in Vermont or Wyoming.

Election Performance Index

In 2013, the Pew Center on the States released the Election Performance Index which measures 17 indicators of effective election administration. California ranks 48th out the 51 states and the District of Columbia, just above Alabama and Mississippi. The indicators include the adoption of voting technology, the accuracy of voter rolls, reported problems with registration and absentee ballots, the voter registration rate and election turnout.

Specifically, the report noted that in 2010, because of problems with voter registration California had

- The highest rate of provisional ballots cast
- A high rate of provisional ballots rejected
- The highest rate of absentee ballots rejected
- A high rate of nonvoting

Access to election information can help a voter solve problems with their voter registration. However, California voters also do not have easy access to election information compared to voters in other states. In 18 states voters are able to go to the state website and check their:

- registration status
- location of their polling place
- specific ballot information
- status of their absentee ballots
- status of their provisional ballots.

While 39 states offer at least 2 of these tools, California offers none of them.

Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)

HAVA initiated the modernization of voting by providing funding and protocols for the use of new technology, such as statewide voter database. The intent of promoting these databases was to allow more accurate results in compiling, updating and verifying voter data. HAVA allocated \$348 million to California to meet the goals of the Act.

This Bill

This bill would require state voter registration agencies to share information with the Secretary of State in order to maintain accurate voter registration records.

This bill would require the Secretary of State's website to allow voters to check the status of their voter registration.

This bill would require the Secretary of State's website allow voters to check the status of their absentee ballot.

This bill would require the Secretary of State's website to allow voters to check the status of their provisional ballot.

This bill would require the Secretary of State to work with other states to maintain accurate voter records.