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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CLERKS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

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March 22, 2013

State Senator Leland Yee, Author
State Capitol
Room 4074
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Dear Assembly Member Patterson:

The California Association of Clerks and Election Officials Elections Legislative Committee has reviewed **SB 240** (as introduced February 12, 2013), requiring the local election official to, during statewide general elections, establish at least one polling place on the campuses of each California State University and University of California within the County, as well as consideration for local community colleges where convenient for voters. The Committee appreciates the additional options for students and other voters, but would like to share the following concerns, which are the same as were expressed with AB 346 (Atkins, 2011).

County elections officials understand the desire to ensure that college students have easy access to the ballot. However, establishing polling places on University and community college campuses during statewide general elections may create a host of other problems. We acknowledge that your proposal provides an exemption for counties and city and county jurisdictions that have a population of less than 150,000. However, some of the issues identified in the discussion of your bill include:

- ★ Increased voter confusion - students are not registered in the county where they attend college, and have maintained a voting domicile elsewhere and vote by mail.
- ★ Increased voter confusion – establishing polling places during general elections will create confusion for students attending college during a primary, a special election, or odd-numbered year local elections.
- ★ Increased number of provisional ballots - students may not be eligible to vote in the precinct that they attend college and will have to vote a provisional ballot
- ★ Long lines for eligible voters who wait while poll workers provide provisional voting assistance to students. The issue of long lines will be exacerbated with the lengthy gubernatorial general election ballot and during high turnout presidential elections.
- ★ Increased risk of running out of official election materials for eligible voters when too many ineligible students appear to vote and are provided a provisional ballot
- ★ Larger, physically confusing campuses where the voting room may be very difficult to locate and be far from available parking or public transportation. Many buildings on college campuses are not ADA compliant. Typically, the most physically accessible buildings are the college campus centers or libraries, located in the heart of campus and very far from student housing.

There are additional issues, such as, increased confusion when an election occurs at times when there temporarily are no students residing at the campus or the campus is closed; lack of available parking when campus is crowded; and, increased confusion for students

attending classes on campus but who are not residing in that precinct and are not eligible to vote on campus.

We believe that the most successful way to ensure that students are able to vote and have their ballot counted is to minimize confusion and increase voter outreach and education efforts. Working with the Administration of the higher education campus to increase outreach efforts on campus to assist students understand how to register and vote by mail is a better solution. For example, Monterey County Elections Department had a campus polling place at the California State University at Monterey Bay. This location proved to increase voter confusion and the use of provisional voting. Provisional ballots were either partially counted or were rejected as the student was not registered in the precinct or in the County where they attended college. The polling place required additional poll workers and the assistance of field staff to manage the crowds of students.

Working closely with the Dean of Student Affairs to generate campus announcements and send emails to the student body on the procedures and deadlines to register to vote and obtain a vote by mail ballot from their home county or state has proven successful for Monterey County. Election staff meet with campus personnel and student body members involved in voter registration efforts in the months leading up to the election to coordinate efforts. Beginning with messages about registering to vote, the Department develops language for the Dean to distribute to the student body via email and other on campus announcements. The messages continue throughout the early voting period and relate to deadlines to register and how to obtain a vote by mail ballot. On Election Day, the Department stations two election officials at the Student Center with a secure vote by mail ballot drop box and a Roster Index of Voters to accept ballots and direct students to their proper voting location within the County. This partnership began in 2009, after the extremely high foot traffic, increased student voter confusion and use of provisional ballots during the Presidential general election, and has shown to successfully educate voters reflecting that few students actually claim their temporary college residence as their voting domicile and are voting by mail.

If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the Monterey County Elections Department, at (831) 796-1499.

Very truly yours,



Linda Tulett
Correspondence Secretary
California Association of Clerks and Election Officials

- c: Honorable Paul Fong, Chair, Assembly Committee on Elections and Redistricting
- Honorable Lou Correa, Chair, Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments
- Jill Lavine, Co-Chair, CACEO Elections Legislative Committee
- Karen Rhea, Co-Chair, CACEO Elections Legislative Committee
- Barry Brokaw, Sacramento Advocates