

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 28, 2014

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 22, 2014

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2013–14 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1873

Introduced by Assembly Members Gonzalez and Mullin

February 19, 2014

An act to amend ~~Sections 4004 and~~ *Section* 10703 of, and to add Section 4000.5 to, the Elections Code, relating to elections.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1873, as amended, Gonzalez. Mail ballot elections.

~~(1) Existing law provides for the calling of a special election to fill a congressional or legislative vacancy. Under existing law, the governing body of a local agency is authorized to conduct a local, special, or consolidated election wholly by mail under specified conditions.~~

This bill would, *until January 1, 2020*, authorize a board of supervisors of a county to conduct a special election or special consolidated election to fill a congressional or legislative vacancy wholly by mail under specified conditions. The bill would also authorize any jurisdiction conducting a special election wholly by mail to process vote by mail ballot return envelopes beginning 29 days before the election, and would authorize any jurisdiction in possession of the necessary computer capability to process vote by mail ballots on the 10th business day before the election, as specified.

~~(2) Existing law authorizes an election in a small city, defined as a city with a population of 100,000 or less, or in a school district or special district, to be conducted wholly as an all-mail ballot election, subject to certain conditions, including that the election is a special election to~~

~~fill a vacancy in the legislative body or governing body and that the election not be consolidated with any other election.~~

~~This bill would remove the requirement that an all-mail ballot election be conducted only in a city with a population of 100,000 or less. The bill would also delete the provision prohibiting a consolidated election from being conducted wholly by mail, and would instead provide that in order to conduct an all-mail ballot election in a consolidated election in which boundaries overlap, all jurisdictions of the overlapping boundaries would be required to agree to conduct the election as an all-mail ballot election. The bill would additionally authorize a municipal election, as specified, to be conducted as an all-mail ballot election.~~

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 4000.5 is added to the Elections Code,
- 2 to read:
- 3 4000.5. (a) ~~Notwithstanding Section 4000, 4000 or any other~~
- 4 *law*, a special election or special consolidated election may be
- 5 conducted wholly by mail to fill a vacancy in a congressional or
- 6 legislative office if all of the following apply:
- 7 (1) The board of supervisors of each county that lies in whole
- 8 or in part within the congressional or legislative district, by
- 9 resolution, authorizes the use of mailed ballots for the election.
- 10 (2) The election does not occur on the same date as a statewide
- 11 *direct primary or election, statewide general election election*, or
- 12 any other election conducted in an overlapping jurisdiction that is
- 13 not consolidated and conducted wholly by mail pursuant to this
- 14 section.
- 15 (3) (A) At least one ballot dropoff location is provided per city
- 16 and is open during business hours to receive voted ballots
- 17 beginning ~~21 days~~ *not less than seven days* before the date of the
- 18 election.
- 19 (B) The number of dropoff locations in unincorporated areas
- 20 shall be based on the number of unincorporated registered voters
- 21 divided by 100,000 (rounded to the next whole number) with no
- 22 less than one location to be selected.
- 23 (C) On at least one Saturday and Sunday on or after the date an
- 24 elections official first delivers ballots to voters, the elections official

1 shall allow any voter to vote the ballot at the office of the elections
 2 official a satellite location within the congressional or legislative
 3 district pursuant to Section 3018. The elections official shall
 4 determine the hours of operation for each Saturday and Sunday,
 5 provided that the office of the elections official satellite location
 6 shall be open to voters for a minimum of six hours on each
 7 designated Saturday and Sunday.

8 (D) At least one polling place is provided per city or the polling
 9 places are fixed in a manner so that there is one polling place for
 10 every ~~100,000 residents~~ 10,000 registered voters within the
 11 congressional or legislative district, as determined by the annual
 12 city total population rankings by the Demographic Research Unit
 13 of the Department of Finance, on the 88th day prior to the day of
 14 the election, whichever results in more polling places. A polling
 15 place shall allow voters a voter to request and vote a ballot between
 16 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. on the day of the election if election they have
 17 not received their ballots in the mail or if they need replacement
 18 ballots for any other reason.

19 ~~(E) Upon the request of the city, county, or district, the~~
 20 (E) The polling places provided under this section shall be
 21 established in accordance with the accessibility requirements
 22 described in Article 5 (commencing with Section 12280) of Chapter
 23 3 of Division 12 and in the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42
 24 U.S.C. Sec. 1971 et seq.), and shall be evenly distributed
 25 throughout the congressional or legislative district.

26 (F) Precinct boards shall be appointed and established in
 27 accordance with Article 1 (commencing with Section 12300) of
 28 Chapter 4 of Division 12.

29 (G) Except as otherwise provided in this section, the election
 30 day procedures shall be conducted in accordance with Division
 31 14 (commencing with Section 14000).

32 (H) The elections official may provide, at his or her discretion,
 33 additional ballot dropoff locations and polling places.

34 (4) The elections official delivers to each voter all supplies
 35 necessary for the use and return of the mail ballot, including an
 36 envelope for the return of the voted mail ballot with postage
 37 prepaid.

38 (5) The elections official delivers to each voter, with either the
 39 sample ballot sent pursuant to Section 13303 or with the voter's
 40 ballot, a list of the ballot dropoff locations pursuant to paragraph

1 ~~(3), and posts that list on the Internet Web site of the county~~
2 ~~elections office. all of the following:~~

3 (A) *A notice informing voters that the election is being conducted*
4 *wholly by mail and that each eligible voter will receive a ballot*
5 *by mail.*

6 (B) *A list of the ballot dropoff locations and polling places*
7 *established pursuant to paragraph (3). The list shall also be posted*
8 *on the Internet Web site of the county elections official.*

9 (C) *A statement informing voters that the voting materials,*
10 *including the official ballot and the facsimile ballot, are available*
11 *in all languages required by subdivision (c) of Section 14201 or*
12 *the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 1971 et seq.).*

13 (b) If the congressional or legislative district includes more than
14 one county, the board of supervisors of every county within the
15 district shall enter into an agreement to conduct the special election
16 wholly by mail pursuant to this section.

17 (c) The return of voted mail ballots is subject to subdivision (d)
18 and Section 3017.

19 (d) (1) All vote by mail ballots cast under this section shall be
20 received by the elections official from whom they were obtained
21 or by the precinct board no later than the close of the polls on
22 election day.

23 (2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), any vote by mail ballot cast
24 under this section shall be timely cast if it is received by the voter's
25 elections official no later than three days after election day and
26 either of the following is satisfied:

27 (A) The ballot is postmarked on or before election day or is
28 time stamped or date stamped by a bona fide private mail delivery
29 company on or before election day.

30 (B) If the ballot has no postmark, a postmark with no date, or
31 an illegible postmark, the vote by mail ballot identification
32 envelope is signed and dated pursuant to Section 3011 on or before
33 election day.

34 (e) (1) Any jurisdiction conducting a special election under this
35 section may process vote by mail ballot return envelopes beginning
36 29 days before the election. Processing vote by mail ballot return
37 envelopes may include verifying the voter's signature on the vote
38 by mail ballot return envelope and updating voter history records.

39 (2) Any jurisdiction conducting a special election under this
40 section and in possession of the necessary computer capability

1 may start to process vote by mail ballots on the 10th business day
2 before the election. Processing vote by mail ballots includes
3 opening vote by mail ballot return envelopes, removing ballots,
4 duplicating any damaged ballots, and preparing the ballots to be
5 machine read, or machine reading them, but under no circumstances
6 shall a vote count be accessed or released until 8 p.m. on the day
7 of the election. All other jurisdictions shall start to process vote
8 by mail ballots at 5 p.m. on the day before the election.

9 (f) Results of any vote by mail ballot tabulation or count shall
10 not be released before the close of the polls on the day of the
11 election.

12 (g) *This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2020,*
13 *and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that*
14 *is enacted before January 1, 2020, deletes or extends that date.*

15 ~~SEC. 2. Section 4004 of the Elections Code is amended to read:~~

16 ~~4004. Notwithstanding Sections 1500 and 4000, an election in~~
17 ~~a county, city, school district, or special district may be conducted~~
18 ~~wholly as an all-mail ballot election, subject to the following~~
19 ~~conditions:~~

20 ~~(a) The legislative body of the county or city or the governing~~
21 ~~body of the school district or special district, by resolution,~~
22 ~~authorizes the use of mailed ballots for the election.~~

23 ~~(b) The election is a special election to fill a vacancy in the~~
24 ~~legislative body or governing body, or is a special election~~
25 ~~conducted pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 9200)~~
26 ~~of Division 9.~~

27 ~~(c) The election is not held on the same date as a statewide~~
28 ~~primary or general election.~~

29 ~~(d) In a consolidated election in which boundaries overlap, all~~
30 ~~of the jurisdictions within the overlapping boundaries agree to~~
31 ~~conduct the election as an all-mail ballot election.~~

32 ~~(e) The return of voted mail ballots is subject to Section 3017.~~

33 ~~SEC. 3.~~

34 ~~SEC. 2. Section 10703 of the Elections Code is amended to~~
35 ~~read:~~

36 ~~10703. (a) A special election to fill a vacancy in the office of~~
37 ~~Representative in Congress, State Senator, or Member of the~~
38 ~~Assembly shall be conducted on a Tuesday at least 126 days, but~~
39 ~~not more than 140 days, following the issuance of an election~~
40 ~~proclamation by the Governor pursuant to Section 1773 of the~~

1 Government Code, except that the special election may be
2 conducted within 180 days following the proclamation in order
3 that the election or the primary election may be consolidated with
4 the next regularly scheduled statewide election or local election
5 occurring wholly or partially within the same territory in which
6 the vacancy exists, provided that the voters eligible to vote in the
7 local election comprise at least 50 percent of all the voters eligible
8 to vote on the vacancy.

9 (a)

10 (b) Except as provided in Chapter 3 (commencing with Section
11 10730), a special election or a primary election may not be
12 conducted on the day after a state holiday.

13 (b)

14 (c) (1) A special election described in this section may be
15 conducted wholly by mail pursuant to Section 4000.5.

16 (2) *This subdivision shall remain in effect only until January*
17 *1, 2020, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted*
18 *statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2020, deletes or extends*
19 *that date.*