



March 27, 2018

The Honorable Jim Cooper
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: Voting Systems Funding for Elections Administration
Hearing Date: April 3, 2018 – Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4**

Dear Assembly Member Cooper:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and the Urban Counties of California (UCC), we write in regards to the proposed funding allocation in the Governor's January Budget of approximately \$134 million for elections systems. This allocation marks the first in over 15 years and is a notable contribution to statewide voting system needs. However, we are concerned it will be insufficient to make the necessary investment to the benefit of the State and local agencies that rely on counties for elections administration. Many county voting systems are nearing the end of their useful shelf-life and an investment now in those systems is necessary to ensure equipment is fully functioning for next decade of voting.

Elections administration is a basic and important duty assigned to counties on behalf of the State for candidate contests and policy decisions at all levels of government, from the smallest school district to the national stage. While counties can recover direct costs for conducting elections from cities, special districts and school districts this does not contribute to their overall voting system maintenance. The last major investment in voting systems was in 2002, following the Help America Vote Act that appropriated \$252 million to California for the replacement of county voting systems. During the same period California voters passed Proposition 41, the Voting Modernization Bond Act of 2002, which provided \$200 million in state funds. Most California counties used their funding to purchase new voting equipment prior to the 2006 election cycle. However, most systems were based on technology of the 1990's and still today rely on rapidly aging equipment and out-of-date technology.

A 2017 report by the Legislative Analyst's Office examined voting administration and offered that the State has a clear interest in secure, timely, and uniform elections. They noted that while the State reaps regular benefits from county elections administration, it only sporadically provides funding to counties for election activities.

The proposed \$134 million allocation regrettably falls short of what we understand actual needs will be for all 58 counties. While over a dozen counties are eligible to change to the "vote center" model in 2018 we understand most will retain the existing precinct election day model, which relatively costs more than the vote center model. Furthermore, we recognize the intent of the State to incentivize the vote center model transition by providing greater matching funds but this may create a hasty transition that counties are not ready to make and sets aside the urgent need

for equipment upgrades. Those voting system changes would not just be a one or two-year patch but a serious investment for the next decade of voting needs.

We have every confidence that counties will continue to faithfully and expertly administer elections on behalf of the state to the best of their ability. However, we strongly believe a one-time investment now is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for all who are involved, including elections officials, state and local agencies, and the voters of California. If you have any questions regarding our position please do not hesitate to contact Dorothy Johnson (CSAC) at (916) 650-8133 or Jolena Voorhis (UCC) at 916) 327-7531.

Sincerely,



Dorothy Johnson
CSAC Legislative Representative



Jolena Voorhis
UCC Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Alex Padilla, California Secretary of State
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4
Genevieve Morelos, Consultant, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4