



July 10, 2015

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The Honorable Ben Allen  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 2054  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 450 (Allen) – Elections. All-Mailed Ballot Elections.  
Support – As amended July 7, 2015  
Hearing Date – July 15, 2015: Assembly Elections and Redistricting Committee**

Dear Senator Allen:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), I am pleased to notify you of our support for your Senate Bill 450, related to all-mailed ballot elections. This measure marks a milestone in long-standing election reform efforts in California. Voter participation is disappointing at best and election turnout forecasts are dismal if the status quo continues. The changes authorized by SB 450 would offer great opportunities in the counties that are able to implement the new system, but, of course, not without real challenges facing elections administrators.

We offer our support knowing full well that dialogue with stakeholders, including the California Association of Clerks and Elections Officials, will continue in earnest to address technical issues and practical concerns related to the many components that support an all-mailed ballot voting system. This includes updated equipment and technology, adequate staffing levels, secured funding, and helping voters understand the system. The foundation for the positive changes proposed in SB 450 will be undermined if hasty action is taken or if critical factors related to elections administration are discounted.

It is critical that SB 450 strikes a balance between uniformity and flexibility. The very fact that SB 450 makes all-mailed ballot elections optional by county seems to speak to this need. However, there are distinct disadvantages to the opt-in approach. The significant start-up costs will likely serve as an impediment for many counties to make the switch while other counties will be eager to start with resources at the ready. The result will be a patchwork of voting systems used throughout the state. In addition, the lack of mandated implementation removes the State's obligation for funding assistance. This will further delay implementation and realizing the measure's intended outcome of an active and highly engaged voting public. We respectfully suggest that as conversations continue a funding mechanism is considered to help counties bring the new system onboard. The State's efforts to achieve a modern system, truly serving all Californians equally, will happen sooner and with greater consistency even with partial financial help.

CSAC applauds the work done through purposeful collaboration to make the goals of SB 450 a reality. We look forward to seeing the fruits of that collaboration bring efficient and accessible

voting to all communities in our state. If you should have any questions regarding our position, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 327-7500, extension 515.

Sincerely,



Dorothy Holzem  
Legislative Representative

cc: Honorable Bob Hertzberg, California State Senate  
Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, California State Assembly  
Honorable Kevin Mullin, California State Assembly  
Chair and Members, Assembly Elections and Redistricting Committee  
Ethan Jones, Chief Consultant, Assembly Elections and Redistricting Committee  
Daryl Thomas, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus