



Senate Bill 163

Vote-By-Mail Ballots to All Registered Voters

SUMMARY

Senate Bill 163 ensures that every registered voter across the state will receive a vote-by-mail ballot for statewide primary, special and general elections. By receiving a vote-by-mail ballot, voters are not prevented from voting at their designated precinct polling locations; rather, they are given an easy choice between voting by mail and voting at the polling place, which further enfranchises voters and encourages voters to engage in their civic duty.

ISSUE

For many working Californians, carving time out of a busy work schedule to vote presents a nearly impossible challenge. Californians should not have to sacrifice their right to vote because they work or have to commute or need to take care of their children and can't make it to a polling location.

In recent elections, great disparities in voter turnout have emerged between areas of the state with low and high rates of permanent absentee voters – voters who always receive their ballots by mail.

SB 163 will give Californians and their families greater freedom to vote in the way that best fits with their daily lives. Voters who want to vote at the polling place will still be able to, and all registered voters who find it more convenient to vote by mail will be given an easy way to do so.

Having ballots in the hands of every voter will empower communities to have conversations about candidates and ballot measures and will strengthen individual voters' connection with their elected government. Individuals and families will be able to continue the tradition of instilling the values of civic engagement not just at the polling place, but also in the days and weeks leading up to election day with their ballots at home.

In maintaining a healthy democracy in California, it is important that the residents of the state have the tools they need to participate in every election. Broadening the ability of Californians to engage in the democratic process will yield more representative election results and ensure that the voices of more California residents are heard.

SB 163 (HERTZBERG)

This bill would require all counties to issue vote-by-mail ballots to all registered voters on the county voter rolls for statewide primary, special and general elections. While voters will receive a vote-by-mail ballot before the election, they will still have the option to go to their designated polling place and cast a ballot in person. The choice is theirs.