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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CLERKS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

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March 8, 2023

The Honorable Assemblymember Isaac G. Bryan
Chair, Assembly Elections Committee
1020 N Street, Room 365
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 13 (Essayli) Elections: Election Day holiday: voting by mail - OPPOSE

Dear Assemblymember Bryan:

The California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) Elections Legislative Committee must regrettably oppose Assembly Bill 13 (Essayli), which would repeal the California Voter's Choice Act of 2016 and restore prior restrictions on vote-by-mail ballots.

As the officials charged with conducting fair and transparent elections in California, we share Assemblymember Essayli's desire to "strengthen the integrity of our elections while ensuring the will of the voters is timely and accurately represented," which he expressed in a December 5, 2022 news release about AB 13. CACEO's opposition is due to unintended impacts of the proposed changes in AB 13 that are counter to the commitment to ensuring voters have access, choice and convenience when exercising their right to vote.

Twenty-seven counties in the state have adopted the Voter's Choice Act election model, which provides that a ballot will be mailed to all active registered voters in the county and provides voters with several ways to cast their vote-by-mail ballot and 11 days of in-person voting at any vote center in the county.

Through several pieces of legislation adopted since 2020, all counties in the state must mail a ballot to their active registered voters. This has resulted in more and more voters choosing to cast a vote-by-mail ballot. In the 2022 General Election, 87.52% of the ballots cast in the state were vote-by-mail ballots returned through the U.S. Postal Service or placed in a ballot drop box or dropped off at a vote center or polling place.

AB 13 would repeal the Voter's Choice Act, and it would restore the old, no longer existing, restrictions on vote-by-mail ballots, including:

- Voters must request a vote-by-mail ballot or apply to be a permanent vote-by-mail voter in writing.
- Voters may only authorize a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, or a person residing in the same household as the voter to return their vote-by-mail ballot.
- Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received by the voter's elections official via the United States Postal Service or a bona fide private mail delivery company no later than three days after Election Day.

CACEO appreciates Assemblymember Essayli's desire to improve the integrity of elections. But as his proposal would reduce voters' access to the ballot box, we respectfully request the committee's NO vote on AB 13.

If you or your staff has any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at tricia.webber@santacruzcounty.us or (831) 454-2409, or my co-chairs James Kus, at jkus@fresnocountyca.gov or (559) 600-1730 or Bob Page at bob.page@ocvote.gov or (714) 567-7620-5690.

Respectfully,



Tricia Webber
Co-Chair, CACEO Elections Legislative Committee
California Association of Clerks and Election Officials

cc: Assemblymember Essayli (Author)
Rob Grossglauser, Pinnacle Advocacy LLC
James Kus and Bob Page, Co-Chairs, CACEO Elections Legislative Committee