



DEAN C. LOGAN
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

July 14, 2011

Honorable Felipe Fuentes, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 397 – Online Voter Registration

Dear Chairman Fuentes:

Los Angeles County would like to express its support for SB 397 as it would provide greater access to voter registration to all citizens in Los Angeles County. As the largest election jurisdiction in the state, we support this proposal because it provides greater access to voter registration, increases the accuracy, efficiency and cost of maintaining voter registration records.

Despite the unprecedented levels of voter registration witnessed in 2008, a significant number of potentially eligible citizens remain unregistered. SB 397 will greatly increase access to voter registration. Voters would be able to access, complete, and submit a voter registration form online without the need to sign and mail the form.

The proposed legislation will enhance the accuracy and efficiency of the voter registration process. Currently, paper voter registration forms are hand-keyed into the voter registration system. While registrars have quality assurance measures in place, the nature of interpreting applicants' handwriting, and the all-too-common submission of incomplete applications, leads to inaccurate voter rolls, duplicate voter records, and, in the worst possible case, leaving otherwise eligible citizens off the rolls – often without a remedy prior to the election due to administratively driven registration cutoff dates.

SB 397 also allows for potentially significant cost savings. Several states have adopted online voter registration with great success and relative ease. Los Angeles County estimates savings of at least \$2.4 million within the first five years of implementation.

I am aware and was saddened that recently the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) expressed its opposition to SB 397. Information technology modernization is not only a goal of the Department but of the state as a whole. The Secretary of State (SOS) as well as the DMV have been consulted and engaged throughout the process. The SOS has expressed confidence in the possibility of implementing online voter registration and has worked with the author to amend the bill to ensure it is aligned with SOS priorities and needs.

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In its letter of opposition the DMV cited a number of concerns with the legislation which, I would like to briefly address.

The DMV states that the legislation would require development of a process and infrastructure that would require the Department to devote significant programming and valuable information technology resources. In addition, the DMV expressed concern over funding and potential risks to the statewide voter registration database project VoteCal.

While these concerns are understandable, they have been addressed and do not accurately reflect the implementation envisioned. Much of the infrastructure necessary already exists as part of a data matching and exchange process called Calvalidator. This process already provides for data exchange between the DMV and SOS. This infrastructure was developed as part of an agreement with the Department of Justice, setting the terms for interim compliance with Sec. 203 of the Help American Vote Act. According to the SOS the only significant programming required of DMV would be including a copy of the signature image on record in addition to the data already provided to SOS.

It is the intent of the SOS and the bill that HAVA funds be authorized to cover the costs associated with implementation of online voter registration. Funding should not be a concern. Without the authorization of HAVA funds, online voter registration may not move forward under SB 397.

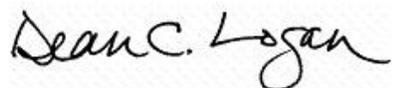
The SOS has not expressed any concerns that the implementation of online voter registration under SB 397 would in any way put VoteCal at risk.

Recognizing the challenges associated with coordinating between state agencies and local elections administrators, especially as each agency may have competing priorities, other states have modeled the ability to overcome those obstacles and have shown that the benefits warrant the effort.

California has fallen behind and will fall even further behind if modernization efforts such as online voter registration are held off until the implementation of the Secretary of State's statewide voter registration database, which is now estimated for implementation in 2015.

Looking ahead toward the 2012 Presidential Election, SB 397 could help California improve voter registration and thereby increase voter participation while also reducing election costs. We urge you to move this bill forward.

Sincerely,



DEAN C. LOGAN
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

c: Assembly Appropriations Committee Members