



April 3, 2024

Assemblymember Marc Berman
State Capitol
1021 O Street, Suite 8130
Sacramento, CA 95818

RE: AB 2642 – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Berman:

The California Voter Foundation (CVF) is pleased to support your bill, AB 2642, The Protecting Elections from Armed Coercion and Extremism Act (The PEACE Act). If enacted, AB 2642 will provide added protections to allow election workers and officials, and voters, to sue for civil damages if they encounter intimidating, threatening or coercive behavior at voting and election sites.

This innovative legislation also creates a presumption that people who carry firearms around election activities or workers are engaged in such intimidation, threats, or coercion. While existing laws already prohibit firearms at voting sites and inside government buildings, this bill will provide supplemental protections to allow election workers to seek financial compensation if they encounter harassment, thus providing a further deterrent to anyone who might think of engaging in this behavior.

This rise in U.S. political violence in recent years has contributed to the departure of many experienced election officials and staffers, in California and elsewhere. A CVF analysis found that more than half of California's 58 counties – 52 percent, or 30 counties – experienced a turnover of their top election official between March 2020 and March 2024.

CVF has worked for over thirty years to serve California voters and strengthen California election security. Since 2021, CVF's election security work has focused on the need to protect the personnel we rely on to conduct our elections. The rise in threats and harassment of election officials and their staff has been well-documented, including by CVF in our landmark 2021 report, *Documenting and Addressing Harassment of Election Officials* (online at calvoter.org/harassment). That year's insurrection at the U.S. Capitol put on display the lengths that some citizens are willing to go to in order to express their views, as well as the violence, injury and deaths that can result from disputed electoral outcomes.

We all rely on election workers to safely and securely conduct free and fair elections in order to peacefully determine who holds public office in California. The PEACE Act, if enacted, will send a powerful signal to the California election community that state lawmakers support and protect democracy's frontline workers. Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Kim Alexander, President & Founder
California Voter Foundation