



September 13, 2022

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, 9th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE: Re: SB 1131 (Newman) Extending “Safe at Home” to California’s Election Workers

Dear Governor Newsom:

The California Voter Foundation, a co-sponsor of SB 1131, urges you to sign SB 1131 into law **as soon as possible**. SB 1131 includes an urgency clause and will take effect immediately in advance of the 2022 midterm election with your signature, helping to protect California’s election workers, along with other public employees from threats and harassment resulting from their public occupations.

Over the past two years, those charged with administering California’s elections have been increasingly subjected to targeted threats of violence, harassment and intimidation, largely resulting from ongoing false claims of election fraud. Election workers face the risk of “doxing” and harassment as the result of their names, photographs, and addresses being posted online and on social media platforms, which has already happened to numerous election officials around the country.

Since November 2020, twenty of California’s 58 county registrars – *over one-third* - have either left their positions or chosen to not seek re-election. As reported last year in the Los Angeles Times, many are leaving their positions due to increased aggressive and abusive behavior targeted at them.¹

The “Safe at Home” program has been operating in California for over two decades and enables survivors of domestic violence and stalking to shield their personal data from public exposure. Access to this program, which is administered by the California Secretary of State, has been extended to other workers in sensitive positions - reproductive health workers in 2002 and,

¹ California Voter Foundation, “Documenting and Addressing Harassment of Election Officials”, June 8, 2021, https://www.calvoter.org/sites/default/files/cvf_addressing_harassment_of_election_officials_report.pdf, citing Los Angeles Times’ April 21, 2021 article by John Myers, “Essential Politics: California’s election official exodus”, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/newsletter/2021-04-12/california-elections-officials-exodus-essential-politics>. Since November 2020, county election officials have left or will retire in 2022 from the following counties: Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Merced, Mono, Monterey, Nevada, Orange, Plumas, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Ventura and Yuba.

through an executive order you issued, public health officials in 2020 (EO N-80-20). Election officials and their staff, who are the frontline workers of democracy, deserve and are in need of similar protection.

SB 1131 will provide protection and peace of mind to California election workers by extending to them the option of enrolling in one of two existing address protection programs. Eligibility for the Secretary of State's "Safe at Home" program would be extended to election workers as well as other government employees, enabling them to have their mail redirected to a substitute mailing address. Alternatively, election workers may choose to enroll in an address confidentiality program that enables state and local agencies to respond to requests for public records without disclosing the address of election workers.

SB 1131 also directs county election officials to no longer publicly post the names of poll workers at voting sites or on their web sites to protect poll workers' privacy as well. Threats to election workers are depressing poll worker recruitment; this provision can help alleviate safety concerns for these election workers too.

In 2021, the California Voter Foundation released "Documenting and Addressing Harassment of Election Officials" to shed light on election officials' experiences around the country following the November 2020 election. Millions of people believe the "Big Lie" and other fraudulent claims about the 2020 Presidential Election. Election officials and their staff are the ones having to respond to the dissemination of election mis- and disinformation through social media, anti-government organizations, and partisan political campaigns. We have already seen how violent, political extremists were able to successfully storm the U.S. Capitol and interrupt the certification of the last Presidential election. Five people died as a result.

When people have to worry about walking to their cars at night from their offices, are reluctant to wear any article of clothing in public that identifies them as an election worker, are leaving their jobs altogether, are threatened with death, their family members are named, and they have to keep a "go bag" by their door in case their home is picketed, we must act.

The California Voter Foundation has successfully advanced election security in the state and nation for over two decades; it was not until the 2020 Presidential Election that we realized the physical safety and well-being of the people who administer our elections is an essential component of election security. California's voting process is already among the most secure in the country; if enacted, SB 1131 will help ensure that the people entrusted with administering it are also safe and secure. I hope we can count on your support and timely signature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alex" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kim Alexander
President & Founder