



January 9, 2020

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
Assembly Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 207 (Hurtado): SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Gonzalez:

The California Voter Foundation supports SB 207, which, if enacted, will simplify the process for voters updating their address or party preference in the two weeks prior to and on Election Day.

In 2008 and 2016, California voters experienced widespread confusion and profound disappointment when attempting to cast ballots for the Presidential Primary candidates of their choice. Some thought they were independent but were actually registered with the American Independent Party. Many No Party Preference voters received ballots in the mail with no presidential candidates on them, failing to respond to an earlier request to state a preference. Californians wanting to vote in the Republican Party's presidential primary who had not changed their party preference at least two weeks prior to Election Day were unable to do so.

It is understandable that California voters find Presidential primary elections confusing. All other state primary contests are "open" and voters are allowed to vote for any candidate of any party regardless of the party with which one is registered. But when it comes to voting in a Presidential primary, suddenly party affiliation matters and voters' choices are restricted to just those candidates running in their party's primary, or, if they are No Party Preference voters, they can "cross over" and vote in some parties' primaries, such as the Democratic Party's, but not others, depending on whether the party allows it.

Fortunately, last year California enacted SB 72/Umberg, requiring all voting sites to offer same-day, conditional voter registration. This is a much-needed failsafe that will ensure voters who have not yet registered or need to update their registration are able to do so and vote for their preferred Presidential candidate on Election Day. But it is also likely to result in considerably longer wait times at voting locations.

Local election officials are anticipating high numbers of voters needing to update their address within the county due to recent moves, or change their party preference in order to vote for their preferred candidate on Election Day. SB 207 seeks to alleviate pressure on poll workers and voters alike by giving voters who are already registered to vote in their county the ability to simply update their address or party preference by filling out a written affidavit of the changes instead of completing an entirely new voter registration application.

This change will help reduce wait times for voters, reduce the number of provisional ballots expected to be issued, and reduce backlog during the canvass period while maintaining sufficient requirements to ensure that any updates to information are accurate. The California Voter Foundation supports SB 207 because it will help ensure Californians can vote for the Presidential candidate of their choice in the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary, as well as reduce voter frustration and negative publicity about California elections, which was widespread in June 2016 and can deter people from voting in the future.

Sincerely,

Kim Alexander, President & Founder
California Voter Foundation