



May 16, 2019

The Honorable Mike McGuire  
California State Capitol, Room 5061  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: SB 523 -- SUPPORT**

Dear Senator McGuire:

The California Voter Foundation is pleased to support your SB 523, which if enacted, will ensure that county registrars notify voters who forget to sign their vote-by-mail ballot envelopes and provide them with an opportunity to submit their signature so that their ballots will get counted rather than rejected.

In the November 2018 election, nearly 85,000 ballots cast by California voters statewide were rejected, equal to one percent of all the mail ballots cast. Missing signatures is one of the top three reasons why mail ballots get rejected (the other two leading reasons are late arrival and mismatched signatures).

Voting by mail has expanded significantly in California but counties provide varying ballot envelope designs and instructions to voters for how to complete and submit a vote-by-mail ballot envelope. This lack of standardization adds to voter confusion, especially for first-time or infrequent voters, or voters casting non-English language ballots. Research conducted by the California Civic Engagement Project found that missing signatures was the leading cause for non-English language ballot rejection in the 2012 General Election.

While some counties contact voters whose signatures are missing from their ballot envelopes, not all do so, resulting in unequal treatment for California voters.

In Sacramento County, for last November's General Election, the Registrar of Voters' office sent 2,192 letters to voters whose envelope signatures were missing, and 1,234 voters submitted a signature after being notified, resulting in a 56 percent "cure" rate and 1,234 voters having their votes counted instead of being disenfranchised. Similarly, in June 2018, Sacramento sent out 1,798 "no signature" letters, and 973 voters sent in valid signatures, resulting in a 52 percent cure rate.

California voters deserve an equal opportunity to have their ballots counted, regardless of where they live in the state. SB 523 will ensure that voters across the state are treated equally and have the chance to correct a simple mistake so that their ballots will be counted and they are not disenfranchised.

For these reasons, the California Voter Foundation supports SB 523.

Sincerely,

Kim Alexander  
President & Founder