

Date of Hearing: June 11, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS AND REDISTRICTING
Paul Fong, Chair
SB 44 (Yee) – As Introduced: December 12, 2012

SENATE VOTE: 25-8

SUBJECT: State Internet Web sites: online voter registration.

SUMMARY: Requires each Internet Web site maintained by the state to include a hyperlink on the site's homepage to the online voter registration page of the Internet Web site of the Secretary of State (SOS).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides that a person who is qualified to register to vote and who has a valid California driver's license or state identification card may submit an affidavit of voter registration electronically on the SOS's Internet Web site.
- 2) Require all states to implement a single, uniform, centralized, computerized statewide voter registration list and to define, maintain, and administer this list at the state level, pursuant to the Help America Vote Act of 2002

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

COMMENTS:

- 1) Purpose of the Bill: According to the author:

California online voter registration system gave Californians the ability to register to vote through the Secretary of State's website. The Secretary of State estimates that over 590,000 utilized the online system to register to vote in last year's November election, and increased California's voter rolls to its record high. Furthermore, information released by Political Data Inc. (PDI) – California's largest provider of voter information used by political campaigns – shows that voter turnout of those who used the online system in the 34 days leading to the election was 85%. Online registrants of young voters age 18-29 had an 80% turnout.

SB 44 will increase opportunities for Californians to register or re-register to vote and increase voter participation. Having a voter registration link on every state website will promote the system, and provide access to anyone seeking information or services from the state, especially to some who might otherwise be unaware of the online option.

- 2) National Voter Registration Act: The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) required states to designate state government agencies and offices that provide public assistance or services to people with disabilities as voter registration agencies. In addition,

states were required to designate other offices within the state as voter registration agencies. These could include schools, city and county clerks' offices, fishing and hunting license bureaus, government revenue offices, and unemployment compensation offices. States also had the option under the NVRA to designate federal offices as voter registration agencies, but only with the agreement of those agencies. Finally, each state was required to work with the U.S. Department of Defense to develop and implement procedures for voter registration at Armed Forces recruitment offices.

When an agency is designated as a voter registration agency under the NVRA, it must offer each person who comes into contact with the agency the opportunity to register to vote. If a person declines to register, the agency must ask the person to fill out a form, which is kept on file at the agency office.

While this bill does not create new voter registration agencies pursuant to the NVRA, it is consistent with the purposes of the NVRA by providing additional voter registration opportunities when California voters interact with state government agencies online.

- 3) Arguments in Support: The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees writes in support, "Increasing accessibility to voter registration is important to ensure that all people who have an interest in the affairs of California and who are eligible to vote have the opportunity to do so. The recent online registration option encouraged thousands of people to register and vote for the very first time. This bill helps update technological resources to keep up with the needs of California's diverse and modern population of voters."
- 4) Previous Legislation: SB 35 (Padilla), Chapter 505, Statutes of 2012, added the California Health Benefit Exchange to the list of public assistance agencies required by the NVRA to provide voter registration opportunities.

SB 397 (Yee), Chapter 561, Statutes of 2011, authorized the SOS, in conjunction with the California Department of Motor Vehicles, to implement online voter registration prior to the completion of a new statewide voter registration database.

AB 1357 (Swanson), Chapter 192, Statutes of 2011, requires the SOS, in consultation with county election officials, to design and make an affidavit of registration available on the SOS's Internet Web site, among other provisions.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Advancement Project
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO
California Church Impact
California Common Cause
California Nurses Association
California Teachers Association
CALPIRG
League of Women Voters of California

Opposition

None on file.

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