



DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen Announces Vote-By-Mail Ballots Available for May 19 Special Election

SACRAMENTO – Californians may begin voting by mail today as elections officials start mailing ballots to the millions of registered voters who have requested them for the May 19 Statewide Special Election, Secretary of State Debra Bowen announced today.

The number of Californians who vote by mail has steadily increased in recent years. In the November 2008 General Election, nearly 42% of the ballots were cast by mail rather than at polling places. The 2005 special election brought in 40% of ballots by mail, and in the 2003 special election 30% of ballots were cast by mail. For more vote-by-mail data by county and by election, go to http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_elections.htm.

“Voting by mail is an increasingly popular method of voting in California,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “Whether you are out of town or just want to avoid the crowds on Election Day, voting by mail is a convenient way to cast a ballot.”

California has one of the nation’s most user-friendly vote-by-mail programs. Since 1978, every registered California voter has been allowed to cast a ballot by mail. Before 1978, only people who had certified medical excuses or who would be out of town on Election Day were allowed to vote “absentee.” A 2001 law made it possible for any Californian to register as a permanent vote-by-mail voter, meaning that ballots are automatically mailed to them for every election.

County elections officials begin mailing ballots to permanent vote-by-mail voters today, which is 29 days before the May 19 election. In any given election, tens of thousands more people choose to vote by mail on a one-time basis.

For vote-by-mail ballots to count, elections officials must receive them by the 8:00 p.m. close of polls on Election Day. On Election Day, vote-by-mail voters may still hand-deliver completed ballots to their county elections office or to any polling place in the county where they are registered to vote.

For more information about voting by mail, or to download an application for a vote-by-mail ballot, go to http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_m.htm.

The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is May 12. The last day to register to vote in the May election is May 4.

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