

DEBRA BOWEN

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CONTACT: Kate Folmar
(916) 653-6575

Secretary of State Bowen Reminds Californians Of Election Dos and Don'ts

SACRAMENTO – With 19 days until the May 19 Statewide Special Election, Secretary of State Debra Bowen today reminded voters of their key rights and responsibilities under California law.

“When Californians know their voting rights, they can ensure their voices are heard,” said Secretary Bowen, California’s chief elections officer. “The more knowledgeable voters, poll workers, and election officials are about voting rights, the smoother Election Day will be for everyone.”

The Secretary of State recently mailed the Official Voter Information Guide, which includes a Voter Bill of Rights and other helpful voter information, to every voting household in California. It is also available in audio and print versions at www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov. “Sample ballot” booklets, mailed to voters by county elections offices, offer more information about local candidates and measures.

Secretary Bowen also has a toll-free Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE. Voters may call the Secretary of State’s Voter Hotline any time between now and election night to ask election-related questions or to report potential election fraud or voter intimidation.

A list of key election dos and don'ts is attached.

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

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California Election Dos and Don'ts

DO: Register to vote, or double-check your registration, by May 4, if you want to vote in the May 19 election. Voter registration cards are available at libraries, U.S. Post Offices, county elections offices, and California Department of Motor Vehicles offices, or you can print one from the Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_vr.htm.

If you want to double-check your registration or confirm the accuracy of your information (such as address and political party choice), call your county elections office. Contact information is at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_d.htm.

DON'T: Campaign for votes, solicit petition signatures, or wear campaign materials within 100 feet of a polling place. Electioneering in the immediate area around polling places is illegal in California. More information on this subject is at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ccrov/pdf/2008/september/08285cbm.pdf.

DO: Know that you may still vote even if you have left your home because of a foreclosure. If you have not formed a new permanent residence, you may vote where you were previously registered.

DON'T: Sit on the sidelines during this important election. Consider other ways to get involved in your democracy. Be a poll worker and help make Election Day run smoother for everyone. Host a ballot study group with your neighbors or family. Volunteer for a campaign you believe in, and encourage others to vote.

DO: Request a vote-by-mail ballot from your county elections office by May 12, and cast your ballot by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Any California voter can vote by mail (formerly known as absentee voting). If you choose to vote by mail, remember that those ballots must be turned in by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day at a polling place in your county or at your county elections office. Postmarks do not count for ballots.

If you prefer the in-person experience, polls will be open between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on May 19. If you are in line when the polls close, you will be allowed to vote.

DO: Know your voting rights and your polling place. If, for any reason, your name is not on the list at your polling place, you have the right to cast a provisional ballot. The provisional ballot will be counted after your county elections office has confirmed that you are registered to vote in your county and you did not already vote elsewhere in that election. More information about provisional voting is at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ccrov/pdf/2008/october/08311cm.pdf.

If you don't know where your polling place is, or if you have any concerns about your election experience, call your county elections office or the Secretary of State's Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE.

Ask a poll worker for assistance if you don't understand your voting system. And if you make a mistake on your ballot, ask a poll worker for a new ballot.