



April 6, 2015

The Honorable Fran Pavley
California State Capitol, Room 5108
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 365 - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Pavley:

On behalf of the California Voter Foundation (CVF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the voting process to better serve voters, I'm writing to express our support for your bill, SB 365, which, if enacted, will establish the legality of vote-by-mail ballot drop boxes in California statute and direct the California Secretary of State to also create regulations that establish best practices for the use of ballot drop boxes.

Last August, CVF published a report on an in-depth study we conducted of three counties' vote-by-mail programs. By studying three counties of varying sizes (Orange, Sacramento and Santa Cruz), we discovered a variety of practices and procedures associated with voting by mail and issued a number of recommendations to help strengthen and standardize the vote-by-mail (VBM) process statewide, including the need to enact a comprehensive framework for early voting, so that more VBM ballots will be successfully cast and counted and California voters can enjoy equal voting rights statewide. Our report, "Improving California's Vote-by-Mail Process: A Three-County Study" is online at <http://www.calvoter.org/votemail>.

We learned through our research that while many counties utilize VBM ballot drop boxes, there is no actual provision in California statute that allows counties to provide this service to voters; the counties that implement drop boxes presumably feel it is acceptable to do so because there is nothing in statute that expressly prohibits it. By adding provisions in statute that expressly allow for the use of drop boxes, SB 365 will clear up any confusion counties have about the legality of providing this service to their voters which may help expand their use statewide.

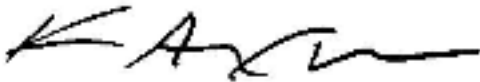
In our study, we found two counties (Sacramento and Santa Cruz) used drop boxes located at other government buildings throughout the county, such as city halls and libraries and one (Orange) did not (other than a drop box immediately outside the county election office). When the drop box option is available, voters utilize it. In November 2012, 17 percent of Santa Cruz County's VBM voters and 9 percent of Sacramento County's VBM voters returned their ballots at drop boxes. Overall, in the three counties studied, CVF

found that a growing number of VBM voters prefer to return their ballots in person, at a drop box or at a polling place on Election Day, thus eliminating the need for postage and reducing the risk and time involved when ballots are delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. In Santa Cruz for example, the percentage of voters returning their ballots in person rose from 40 percent in 2008 to 48 percent in 2012.

While ballot drop boxes are a great convenience for voters, they are not without risk. Currently there are no procedures directing counties to establish protocols to protect these ballots and keep them secure. SB 365 will address this issue as well, by directing the Secretary of State to establish best practices guidelines in regulations that address ballot chain of custody, pick-up times and physical security of ballot drop boxes.

Thank you for introducing this important measure. If you have any questions I can be reached at 916-441-2494 or at kimalex@calvoter.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Alexander', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kim Alexander
President