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**AB-1921 Elections: vote by mail ballots.** (2015-2016)

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**Assembly Bill No. 1921**

**CHAPTER 820**

An act to amend Section 3017 of the Elections Code, relating to elections.

[ Approved by Governor September 29, 2016. Filed with Secretary of State September 29, 2016. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 1921, Gonzalez. Elections: vote by mail ballots.

Existing law requires that the vote by mail ballot be available to any registered voter. Under existing law, a voter who is unable to return his or her vote by mail ballot may designate his or her spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, or person residing in the same household as the vote by mail voter to return the vote by mail ballot. Except in the case of a candidate or the spouse of a candidate, existing law prohibits the return of a voter's vote by mail ballot by one of those designees who is also a paid or volunteer worker of a general purpose committee, controlled committee, or any other group or organization at whose behest the individual designated to return the ballot is performing a service.

This bill would remove those restrictions and instead authorize the designation of any person to return a vote by mail ballot. The bill would prohibit a person designated to return a vote by mail ballot from receiving any form of compensation, as defined, based on the number of ballots that the person has returned and would prohibit an individual, group, or organization from providing compensation on this basis. The bill would state that any person in charge of a vote by mail ballot who knowingly and willingly engages in criminal acts related to that ballot is subject to the appropriate punishment pursuant to existing law.

This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 3017 of the Elections Code proposed by SB 450 that would become operative only if SB 450 and this bill are both chaptered and this bill is chaptered last.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** Section 3017 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

**3017.** (a) All vote by mail ballots cast under this division shall be voted on or before the day of the election. After marking the ballot, the vote by mail voter shall do any of the following: (1) return the ballot by mail or in person to the elections official from whom it came, (2) return the ballot in person to a member of a precinct board at a polling place within the jurisdiction, or (3) return the ballot to the elections official from whom it came at a vote by mail ballot drop-off location, if provided pursuant to Section 3025. However, a vote by mail voter who is unable to return the ballot may designate any person to return the ballot to the elections official from whom it came or to the precinct board at a polling place within the jurisdiction. The ballot must, however, be received by either the elections official from whom it came or the precinct board before the close of the polls on election day.

(b) The elections official shall establish procedures to ensure the secrecy of a ballot returned to a precinct polling place and the security, confidentiality, and integrity of any personal information collected, stored, or otherwise used pursuant to this section.

(c) On or before March 1, 2008, the elections official shall establish procedures to track and confirm the receipt of voted vote by mail ballots and to make this information available by means of online access using the county's elections division Internet Web site. If the county does not have an elections division Internet Web site, the elections official shall establish a toll-free telephone number that may be used to confirm the date a voted vote by mail ballot was received.

(d) The provisions of this section are mandatory, not directory, and a ballot shall not be counted if it is not delivered in compliance with this section.

(e) (1) A person designated to return a vote by mail ballot shall not receive any form of compensation based on the number of ballots that the person has returned and no individual, group, or organization shall provide compensation on this basis.

(2) For purposes of this paragraph, "compensation" means any form of monetary payment, goods, services, benefits, promises or offers of employment, or any other form of consideration offered to another person in exchange for returning another voter's vote by mail ballot.

(3) Any person in charge of a vote by mail ballot and who knowingly and willingly engages in criminal acts related to that ballot as described in Division 18 (commencing with Section 18000), including, but not limited to, fraud, bribery, intimidation, and tampering with or failing to deliver the ballot in a timely fashion, is subject to the appropriate punishment specified in that division.

**SEC. 1.5.** Section 3017 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

**3017.** (a) All vote by mail ballots cast under this division shall be voted on or before the day of the election. After marking the ballot, the vote by mail voter shall do any of the following: (1) return the ballot by mail or in person to the elections official who issued the ballot, (2) return the ballot in person to a member of a precinct board at a polling place or vote center within the state, or (3) return the ballot to a vote by mail ballot dropoff location within the state that is provided pursuant to Section 3025 or 4005. However, a vote by mail voter who is unable to return the ballot may designate any person to return the ballot to the elections official who issued the ballot, to the precinct board at a polling place or vote center within the state, or to a vote by mail ballot dropoff location within the state that is provided pursuant to Section 3025 or 4005. The ballot must, however, be received by the elections official who issued the ballot, the precinct board, or the vote by mail ballot dropoff location before the close of the polls on election day. If a vote by mail ballot is returned to a precinct board at a polling place or vote center, or to a vote by mail ballot dropoff location, that is located in a county that is not the county of the elections official who issued the ballot, the elections official for the county in which the vote by mail ballot is returned shall forward the ballot to the elections official who issued the ballot no later than eight days after receipt.

(b) The elections official shall establish procedures to ensure the secrecy of a ballot returned to a precinct polling place and the security, confidentiality, and integrity of any personal information collected, stored, or otherwise used pursuant to this section.

(c) On or before March 1, 2008, the elections official shall establish procedures to track and confirm the receipt of voted vote by mail ballots and to make this information available by means of online access using the county's elections division Internet Web site. If the county does not have an elections division Internet Web site, the elections official shall establish a toll-free telephone number that may be used to confirm the date a voted vote by mail ballot was received.

(d) The provisions of this section are mandatory, not directory, and a ballot shall not be counted if it is not delivered in compliance with this section.

(e) (1) A person designated to return a vote by mail ballot shall not receive any form of compensation based on the number of ballots that the person has returned and no individual, group, or organization shall provide compensation on this basis.

(2) For purposes of this paragraph, "compensation" means any form of monetary payment, goods, services, benefits, promises or offers of employment, or any other form of consideration offered to another person in exchange for returning another voter's vote by mail ballot.

(3) Any person in charge of a vote by mail ballot and who knowingly and willingly engages in criminal acts related to that ballot as described in Division 18 (commencing with Section 18000), including, but not limited to, fraud, bribery, intimidation, and tampering with or failing to deliver the ballot in a timely fashion, is subject to the appropriate punishment specified in that division.

**SEC. 2.** Section 1.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 3017 of the Elections Code proposed by both this bill and Senate Bill 450. It shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2017, (2)

each bill amends Section 3017 of the Elections Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after Senate Bill 450, in which case Section 1 of this bill shall not become operative.