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**AB-963 Public postsecondary education: Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act.** (2019-2020)

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**Assembly Bill No. 963**

**CHAPTER 559**

An act to add Chapter 10.5 (commencing with Section 66850) to Part 40 of Division 5 of Title 3 of the Education Code, and to add Section 2148.5 to the Elections Code, relating to public postsecondary education.

[ Approved by Governor October 08, 2019. Filed with Secretary of State October 08, 2019. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 963, Petrie-Norris. Public postsecondary education: Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act.

Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California as the 3 segments of public postsecondary education in this state. The missions and functions of these segments are set forth in the Donahoe Higher Education Act.

The Student Voter Registration Act of 2003 requires the Secretary of State to annually provide every high school and University of California campus, and authorizes the Secretary of State to annually provide every community college and California State University campus, with voter registration forms, as specified. The act also requires the California State University and the California Community Colleges to implement a process and the infrastructure to allow a person who enrolls online at the institution to submit an affidavit of voter registration electronically on the internet website of the Secretary of State. The act encourages the University of California to comply with this provision.

This bill would establish the Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Program to be conducted by the Secretary of State, in partnership with the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California. The bill would require each campus of the California Community Colleges and the California State University, and request each campus of the University of California, (1) to distribute, in consultation with the Secretary of State, campuswide emails to all students with specified voting- and election-related dates and information, and to include specified dates on all print and online academic calendars, (2) to post on social media reminders to students of specified voter-related dates and information, and (3) to designate one person per campus as the Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator with specified responsibilities, including developing a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan. The bill would require the Secretary of State to evaluate the program each year, and to report to the Legislature the results of the evaluation on or before January 1, 2021, and annually thereafter. The bill would require the Secretary of State to develop a Students Vote Project to implement these requirements. By imposing additional duties on community college districts, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

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

### **SECTION 1.** (a) The Legislature finds and declares both of the following:

(1) Public postsecondary education institutions in California are voter registration agencies for the purposes of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and as such are charged with specified voter registration responsibilities pursuant to Chapter 6 of Division 2 of the Elections Code.

(2) The Secretary of State is the chief elections officer for California and is required, pursuant to subparagraph (D) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 10 of the Elections Code, to make efforts to promote civic learning and engagement to prepare students to register to vote and to vote.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish clear pathways for the Secretary of State to assist public postsecondary education institutions in meeting the voter registration and participation objectives set forth in the Elections Code.

**SEC. 2.** Chapter 10.5 (commencing with Section 66850) is added to Part 40 of Division 5 of Title 3 of the Education Code, to read:

#### **CHAPTER 10.5. Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act**

**66850.** This chapter shall be known, and may be cited, as the Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act.

**66851.** (a) Beginning January 1, 2020, the Secretary of State, in partnership with the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California, shall conduct a program to be known as the Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Program.

(b) The Secretary of State shall evaluate and report to the Legislature, on or before January 1, 2021, and annually thereafter, the results of the program, including the number of students who registered as a result of the program, statistics relating to the outcome of the program, and any other benefits or problems that arose for the program.

**66852.** Each campus of the California Community Colleges and the California State University shall, and each campus of the University of California is requested to, do all of the following:

(a) (1) In consultation with the Secretary of State, during the first month of each academic semester or quarter, distribute campuswide emails to all students providing the following civic and election dates and information:

(A) National Voter Registration Day, held annually on the fourth Tuesday in September.

(B) The last day to register to vote online or to register to vote by mail or in person.

(C) The date when a county may begin to offer early voting at the office of the elections official or at a satellite location, pursuant to Section 3018 of the Elections Code, and a statement that the date, times, and locations for early voting and conditional voter registration may be confirmed on the internet website of the Secretary of State or at the county elections office.

(D) The primary and general election dates as provided in Chapter 4 of Division 0.5 of the Elections Code and Division 1 of the Elections Code.

(E) A statement that, pursuant to Chapter 1 of Division 3 of the Elections Code, a voter may apply to vote by mail at any time until after the seventh day prior to an election, and that a vote by mail voter may vote in person at the office of the county elections official or at a satellite location established by the county elections official on or before the day of the election.

(F) A link to the internet web page for the Secretary of State's Students Vote Project, established pursuant to Section 2148.5 of the Elections Code.

(2) In consultation with the Secretary of State, one month before each statewide election, distribute by campuswide emails to all students the dates and information specified in subparagraphs (A) through (F) of paragraph (1) and an internet website address link or unique Uniform Resource Locator (URL) link furnished by the Secretary of State's office providing all of the following election information:

(A) The Secretary of State's internet web page for online voter registration. That website shall include a statement providing the information specified in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1).

(B) The Secretary of State's internet website address for election information.

(C) The Secretary of State's internet website address for the most current voter information guide, required to be prepared pursuant to Section 9082.7 of the Elections Code.

(D) The Secretary of State's internet website address for the voter registration status tool, or a similar web page that directs the recipient to voter or election information for the county of the recipient.

(E) A disclaimer stating all of the following:

(i) That the civic and election information provided applies to the county where the campus is located.

(ii) That election information varies by county.

(iii) That recipients of the email are encouraged to check the internet website containing the Secretary of State's voter registration status tool, or a similar web page, to find election information for the county where the recipient's voter registration is active.

(3) Include in both printed and electronic academic calendars the dates specified in subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) of paragraph (1).

(b) (1) Post on social media reminders to students, at least one day before each event occurs unless specified otherwise, of all of the following:

(A) The early voting and conditional voter registration information specified in subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a).

(B) Election day, including a reminder the day before and the day of the election. The reminders shall state that a qualified voter may register to vote on the day of the election, if necessary, at a conditional voter registration site established by the voter's county elections official.

(C) After the emails required by paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) are sent, the voter information guide and county sample ballot information provided in that email.

(2) For the purposes of this subdivision, the social media content can be furnished, or requested, by the Secretary of State.

(c) (1) Designate one person per campus to act as a Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator, who shall do all of the following:

(A) Implement the requirements of this section.

(B) Ensure that, in every academic year, each campus holds a minimum of three election outreach events to increase civic learning, democratic participation, civic engagement, and voter turnout consistent with all of the following:

(i) During an academic term in each even-numbered year, an outreach event shall occur within the final 30 days preceding each statewide primary and general election.

(ii) All students shall be invited to participate in the coordination of and to attend these events.

(iii) All events may be sponsored by a campus-based student organization.

(C) Develop a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan consistent with all of the following:

(i) The coordinator shall invite leadership from faculty and students, and administrators from each of student affairs, academic affairs, and government relations or a similar office to participate in a meeting or meetings to develop the action plan.

(ii) The action plan shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, a campus-specific effort to increase civic learning and democratic participation, with an emphasis on civic engagement, voter turnout, and community building.

(iii) Students shall be invited to develop the action plan and to coordinate the meeting or meetings to develop the action plan.

(D) The coordinator shall share the action plan developed pursuant to subparagraph (C) with the Secretary of State no later than December 1, 2020, for inclusion in the report to the Legislature submitted pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 66851.

The action plan shall be periodically updated and resubmitted to the Secretary of State, as determined necessary by the coordinator.

(2) The Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator shall be nonpartisan.

**SEC. 3.** Section 2148.5 is added to the Elections Code, to read:

**2148.5.** (a) The Secretary of State shall promote and seek to improve student voter registration rates and participation by developing a Students Vote Project to implement the requirements of Section 66852 of the Education Code.

(b) Through the Students Vote Project, the Secretary of State shall provide to the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California, or campuses thereof, the materials and resources required by Section 66852 of the Education Code, including print calendars with civic- and election-related dates.

(c) The Secretary of State shall establish and maintain an internet web page for the Students Vote Project, which shall include the dates and information required to be distributed pursuant to paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 66852 of the Education Code.

**SEC. 4.** If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.