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AB-827 Voting: signature verification. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 827

CHAPTER 279

An act to amend Sections 2194, 3019, 3019.7, and 15301 of the Elections Code, relating to elections.

[Approved by Governor October 03, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 03, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 827, Berman. Voting: signature verification.

(1) Existing law requires an elections official who receives a vote by mail ballot to compare the signature on the identification envelope with the signature in the voter's registration record. If the signature does not compare, or if the identification envelope is missing the signature, the elections official must provide notice to the voter no later than 8 days before certification of the election of the voter's opportunity to verify their signature. The voter may verify their signature no later than 5 p.m. 2 days before certification of the election, including, if applicable, by providing their signature on an unsigned identification statement.

This bill would reduce those deadlines for a regularly scheduled statewide election to no later than 14 calendar days after the election for the elections official to provide notice, and no later than 5 p.m. 22 calendar days after the election for the voter to verify their signature. For an election that is not a regularly scheduled statewide election, the bill would reduce those deadlines to 8 calendar days before certification of the election for the elections official to provide notice, and no later than 5 p.m. 2 calendar days before certification of the election for the voter to verify their signature. The bill would permit an elections official to use a vote by mail ballot drop box to receive the form used by the voter to verify their signature pursuant to these provisions. The bill would require an elections official who receives a completed unsigned identification statement that is not timely submitted to compare the signatures and, if the signatures compare, add the signature to the voter's registration record for use in future elections.

(2) Existing law requires the official canvass of an election to commence no later than the Thursday following the election, as specified, and to continue daily, with the exception of Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, for not less than 6 hours each day until completed.

This bill would specify that if the only ballots left to count are those for which a voter has been provided, or will be provided, the opportunity to verify or to provide their signature, and the elections official does not need to conduct the official canvas for at least 6 hours per day in order to meet the deadline for certification of the results, then the canvass may be conducted for fewer than 6 hours per day until completed.

(3) This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 2194 of the Elections Code proposed by AB 1392 to be operative only if this bill and AB 1392 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

The bill would also incorporate additional changes to Section 3019 of the Elections Code proposed by SB 3 to be operative only if this bill and SB 3 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

(4) By imposing new duties on local elections officials, the bill would create 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.

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

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

SECTION 1. Section 2194 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

2194. (a) Except as provided in Section 2194.1, the affidavit of voter registration information identified in Section 7924.000 of the Government Code:

(1) Shall be confidential and shall not appear on any computer terminal, list, affidavit, duplicate affidavit, or other medium routinely available to the public at the county elections official's office.

(2) Shall not be used for any personal, private, or commercial purpose, including, but not limited to:

(A) The harassment of any voter or voter's household.

(B) The advertising, solicitation, sale, or marketing of products or services to any voter or voter's household.

(C) Reproduction in print, broadcast visual or audio, or display on the internet or any computer terminal unless pursuant to paragraph (3).

(3) Shall be provided with respect to any voter, subject to the provisions of Sections 2166, 2166.5, 2166.7, 2166.8, and 2188, to any candidate for federal, state, or local office, to any committee for or against any initiative or referendum measure for which legal publication is made, and to any person for election, scholarly, journalistic, or political purposes, or for governmental purposes, as determined by the Secretary of State.

(4) May be used by the Secretary of State for the purpose of educating voters pursuant to Section 12173 of the Government Code.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, the California driver's license number, the California identification card number, the social security number, and any other unique identifier used by the State of California for purposes of voter identification shown on the affidavit of voter registration of a registered voter, or added to voter registration records to comply with the requirements of the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 20901 et seq.), are confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person.

(2) Notwithstanding any other law, the signature of the voter shown on the affidavit of voter registration or an image thereof is confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person, except as provided in subdivision (c).

(c) (1) The home address or signature of any voter shall be released whenever the person's vote is challenged pursuant to Sections 15105 to 15108, inclusive, or Article 3 (commencing with Section 14240) of Chapter 3 of Division 14. The address or signature shall be released only to the challenger, to elections officials, and to other persons as necessary to make, defend against, or adjudicate the challenge.

(2) An elections official shall permit a person to view the signature of a voter for the purpose of determining whether the signature compares with a signature on an affidavit of registration or an image thereof or a petition, but shall not permit a signature to be copied.

(d) A governmental entity, or officer or employee thereof, shall not be held civilly liable as a result of disclosure of the information referred to in this section, unless by a showing of gross negligence or willfulness.

(e) For purposes of this section, "voter's household" is defined as the voter's place of residence or mailing address or any persons who reside at the place of residence or use the mailing address as supplied on the affidavit of registration pursuant to paragraphs (3) and (4) of subdivision (a) of Section 2150.

(f) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, information regarding voters who did not sign a vote by mail ballot identification envelope or whose signature on the vote by mail ballot identification envelope did not compare with the voter's signature on file shall be treated as confidential voter registration information pursuant to this section and Section 7924.000 of the Government Code. This information shall be provided with respect to any voter, subject to the provisions of Sections 2166, 2166.5, 2166.7, 2166.8, and

2188, to any candidate for federal, state, or local office, to any committee for or against any initiative or referendum measure for which legal publication is made, and to any person for election, scholarly, journalistic, or political purposes, or for governmental purposes, as determined by the Secretary of State, but otherwise shall not be disclosed to any person. Any disclosure of this information shall be accompanied by a notice to the recipient regarding Sections 18109 and 18540.

(2) Voter information provided pursuant to this subdivision shall be updated daily, include the name of the voter, and be provided in a searchable electronic format. The daily update shall also include, as applicable, information regarding whether a form has been received from the voter to verify their signature pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 3019, whether a form has been received or the voter has otherwise provided a signature pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 3019, and whether the signature provided pursuant to subdivision (d) or (e) of Section 3019 did or did not compare.

SEC. 1.5. Section 2194 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

2194. (a) Except as provided in Section 2194.1, the affidavit of voter registration information identified in Section 7924.000 of the Government Code:

(1) Shall be confidential and shall not appear on any computer terminal, list, affidavit, duplicate affidavit, or other medium routinely available to the public at the county elections official's office.

(2) Shall not be used for any personal, private, or commercial purpose, including, but not limited to:

(A) The harassment of any voter or voter's household.

(B) The advertising, solicitation, sale, or marketing of products or services to any voter or voter's household.

(C) Reproduction in print, broadcast visual or audio, or display on the internet or any computer terminal unless pursuant to paragraph (3).

(3) Shall be provided with respect to any voter, subject to the provisions of Sections 2166, 2166.5, 2166.7, 2166.8, 2166.9, and 2188, to any candidate for federal, state, or local office, to any committee for or against any initiative or referendum measure for which legal publication is made, and to any person for election, scholarly, journalistic, or political purposes, or for governmental purposes, as determined by the Secretary of State.

(4) May be used by the Secretary of State for the purpose of educating voters pursuant to Section 12173 of the Government Code.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, the California driver's license number, the California identification card number, the social security number, and any other unique identifier used by the State of California for purposes of voter identification shown on the affidavit of voter registration of a registered voter, or added to voter registration records to comply with the requirements of the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 20901 et seq.), are confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person.

(2) Notwithstanding any other law, the signature of the voter shown on the affidavit of voter registration or an image thereof is confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person, except as provided in subdivision (c).

(c) (1) The home address or signature of any voter shall be released whenever the person's vote is challenged pursuant to Sections 15105 to 15108, inclusive, or Article 3 (commencing with Section 14240) of Chapter 3 of Division 14. The address or signature shall be released only to the challenger, to elections officials, and to other persons as necessary to make, defend against, or adjudicate the challenge.

(2) An elections official shall permit a person to view the signature of a voter for the purpose of determining whether the signature compares with a signature on an affidavit of registration or an image thereof or a petition, but shall not permit a signature to be copied.

(d) A governmental entity, or officer or employee thereof, shall not be held civilly liable as a result of disclosure of the information referred to in this section, unless by a showing of gross negligence or willfulness.

(e) For purposes of this section, "voter's household" is defined as the voter's place of residence or mailing address or any persons who reside at the place of residence or use the mailing address as supplied on the affidavit of registration pursuant to paragraphs (3) and (4) of subdivision (a) of Section 2150.

(f) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, information regarding voters who did not sign a vote by mail ballot identification envelope or whose signature on the vote by mail ballot identification envelope did not compare with the voter's signature on file shall be treated as confidential voter registration information pursuant to this section and Section 7924.000 of the Government Code. This information shall be provided with respect to any voter, subject to the provisions of Sections 2166, 2166.5, 2166.7, 2166.8, 2166.9, and 2188, to any candidate for federal, state, or local office, to any committee for or against any initiative or referendum

measure for which legal publication is made, and to any person for election, scholarly, journalistic, or political purposes, or for governmental purposes, as determined by the Secretary of State, but otherwise shall not be disclosed to any person. Any disclosure of this information shall be accompanied by a notice to the recipient regarding Sections 18109 and 18540.

(2) Voter information provided pursuant to this subdivision shall be updated daily, include the name of the voter, and be provided in a searchable electronic format. The daily update shall also include, as applicable, information regarding whether a form has been received from the voter to verify their signature pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 3019, whether a form has been received or the voter has otherwise provided a signature pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 3019, and whether the signature provided pursuant to subdivision (d) or (e) of Section 3019 did or did not compare.

SEC. 2. Section 3019 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

3019. (a) (1) Upon receiving a vote by mail ballot, the elections official shall compare the signature on the identification envelope with either of the following to determine if the signatures compare:

(A) The signature appearing on the voter's affidavit of registration or any previous affidavit of registration of the voter.

(B) The signature appearing on a form issued by an elections official that contains the voter's signature and that is part of the voter's registration record.

(2) All of the following apply to the comparison of signatures pursuant to this section, including the comparison of a voter's signature on a signature verification statement, an unsigned identification envelope statement, or a combined vote by mail ballot signature verification statement and unsigned identification envelope statement, with the signature that is part of the voter's registration record:

(A) A presumption exists that the signature on the identification envelope, signature verification statement, unsigned identification envelope statement, or provisional ballot envelope is the voter's signature.

(B) An exact match is not required for an elections official to determine that a voter's signature is valid. The fact that signatures share similar characteristics is sufficient to determine that a signature is valid.

(C) Except as provided in subparagraph (D), the elections official shall consider explanations for discrepancies between signatures that are specified in regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State. For purposes of this subparagraph, explanations include a variation in signature style over time and the haste with which a signature is written.

(D) When comparing signatures, an elections official shall not review or consider a voter's party preference, race, or ethnicity.

(E) The elections official may consider characteristics of the written signature that are specified in regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State. For purposes of this subparagraph, characteristics include the slant of the signature, letter formation, and whether the signature is printed or written in cursive.

(F) The elections official may use facsimiles of voters' signatures, provided that the method of preparing and displaying the facsimiles complies with the law.

(G) In comparing signatures pursuant to this section, an elections official may use signature verification technology. If signature verification technology determines that the signatures do not compare, the signature is subject to the additional procedures described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (c).

(H) The variation of a signature caused by the substitution of initials for the first or middle name, or both, is not grounds for the elections official to determine that the signatures do not compare.

(I) A signature made using a mark such as an "X," or made by a signature stamp, shall be presumed valid and shall be accepted if the signature meets the requirements of Section 354.5.

(b) If upon conducting the comparison of signatures pursuant to subdivision (a) the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the elections official shall deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office.

(c) (1) If upon conducting the comparison of signatures pursuant to subdivision (a) the elections official determines that the signature possesses multiple, significant, and obvious differing characteristics when compared to all signatures in the voter's registration record, the signature is subject to the additional procedures described in paragraph (2).

(2) If the elections official makes the determination described in paragraph (1), the signature shall be rejected only if two additional elections officials each find beyond a reasonable doubt that the signature differs in multiple, significant, and obvious

respects from all signatures in the voter's registration record. If the officials determine that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened and the ballot shall not be counted. The elections official shall write the cause of the rejection on the face of the identification envelope only after completing the procedures described in subdivision (d).

(d) (1) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (E), on or before the next business day after a determination that a voter's signature does not compare pursuant to subdivision (c), but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election, the elections official shall send by first-class mail notice to the voter of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election. The notice shall include a return envelope, with postage paid, for the voter to return a signature verification statement.

(B) If an elections official has a telephone number or email address on file for a voter whose signature does not compare pursuant to subdivision (c), the elections official shall notify the voter by telephone, a text message, or email of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature. If an elections official calls the voter and the voter does not answer, the elections official shall attempt to leave a voicemail message.

(C) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may send additional written notices to a voter identified pursuant to subdivision (c), and may also notify the voter in person or by other means of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature.

(D) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may use any information in a county's election management system, or otherwise in the elections official's possession, for the purpose of notifying the voter of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature.

(E) If it is impracticable under the circumstances for the elections official to send the notice described in subparagraph (A) on or before the next business day, including in the event of technological failure, the elections official shall send the notice as soon as practicable, but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election.

(2) The notice and instructions shall be in substantially the following form. The elections official shall insert the date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election where indicated on the form.

"READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. We have determined that the signature you provided on your vote by mail ballot does not compare with the signature(s) on file in your voter record. In order to ensure that your vote by mail ballot will be counted, the signature verification statement must be completed and returned as soon as possible.
2. The signature verification statement must be received by the elections official of the county where you are registered to vote no later than 5 p.m. on [elections official to insert date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election].
3. You must sign your name where specified on the signature verification statement (Voter's Signature).
4. Place the signature verification statement into the postage-paid return envelope if it is included with these instructions. If a return envelope is not included with these instructions, use your own mailing envelope addressed to your local elections official. Mail, deliver, or have the completed statement delivered to the elections official. If you mail your completed statement using your own envelope, be sure there is sufficient postage and that the address of the elections official is correct.
5. If you do not wish to send the signature verification statement by mail or have it delivered, you may submit your completed statement by email or facsimile transmission to your local elections official, or by other electronic means made available by your local elections official, or submit your completed statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box before the close of the polls on election day."

(3) The notice and instructions shall be translated in all languages required in that county by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 10503).

(4) The elections official shall not reject a vote by mail ballot identified pursuant to subdivision (c) if each of the following conditions are satisfied:

(A) The voter delivers, in person, by mail, by fax, by email, or by other means, a signature verification statement signed by the voter and the elections official receives the statement no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election, or the voter, before the close of the polls on election day, completes and submits a signature verification statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box.

(B) Upon receipt of the signature verification statement, the elections official shall compare the signature on the statement with the signature on file in the voter's record. The elections official shall not delay the comparison until later in the canvass.

(i) If upon conducting the comparison of signatures the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the elections official shall deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office.

(ii) If, under the standards and procedures of subdivision (c), a determination is made that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened and the ballot shall not be counted. The elections official shall write the cause of the rejection on the face of the identification envelope.

(5) The signature verification statement shall be in substantially the following form and may be included on the same page as the notice and instructions specified in paragraph (2):

"SIGNATURE VERIFICATION STATEMENT

I, am a registered voter of _____ County,

State of California. I declare under penalty of perjury that I received and returned a vote by mail ballot. I am a resident of the precinct in which I have voted, and I am the person whose name appears on the vote by mail ballot envelope. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this statement means that my vote by mail ballot will be invalidated.

Voter's Signature

Address"

(6) If the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the official shall use the signature in the signature verification statement, even if returned untimely, to update the voter's signature for future elections, including updating the signature database.

(e) (1) (A) Notwithstanding any other law, if an elections official determines that a voter has failed to sign the identification envelope, the elections official shall not reject the vote by mail ballot if the voter does any of the following:

(i) Signs the identification envelope at the office of the elections official during regular business hours no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election.

(ii) No later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election, completes and submits an unsigned identification envelope statement in substantially the following form:

"UNSIGNED IDENTIFICATION ENVELOPE STATEMENT

I, am a registered voter of _____ County,

State of California. I declare under penalty of perjury that I received and returned a vote by mail ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I am a resident of the precinct in which I have voted, and I am the person whose name appears on the vote by mail ballot envelope. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this statement means that my vote by mail ballot will be invalidated.

Voter's Signature

Address"

(iii) Before the close of the polls on election day, completes and submits an unsigned identification envelope statement, in the form described in clause (ii), to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box.

(B) (i) Except as provided in clause (v), or before the next business day after discovering that a voter has failed to sign the identification envelope, but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election, the elections official shall send by first-class mail notice and instructions to the voter of the opportunity to provide a signature no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election. The notice shall include a return envelope, with postage paid, for the voter to return the unsigned identification envelope statement.

(ii) If an elections official has a telephone number or email address on file for a voter who has failed to sign the identification envelope, the elections official shall notify the voter by telephone, a text message, or email of the opportunity to provide a signature. If an elections official calls the voter and the voter does not answer, the elections official shall attempt to leave a voicemail message.

(iii) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may send additional written notices to a voter identified pursuant to this subdivision, and may also notify the voter in person or by other means of the opportunity to provide a signature.

(iv) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may use any information in the county's election management system, or otherwise in the elections official's possession, for the purpose of notifying the voter of the opportunity to provide a signature.

(v) If it is impracticable under the circumstances for the elections official to send the notice described in clause (i) on or before the next business day, including in the event of technological failure, the elections official shall send the notice as soon as practicable, but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election.

(C) If timely submitted, the elections official shall accept any completed unsigned identification envelope statement. Upon receipt of the unsigned identification envelope statement, the elections official shall compare the voter's signature on the statement in the manner provided by this section. The elections official shall not delay the comparison until later in the canvass.

(i) If the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the elections official shall attach the unsigned identification envelope statement to the identification envelope and deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office.

(ii) If, under the standards and procedures of subdivision (c), a determination is made that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened and the elections official shall provide notice to the voter pursuant to subdivisions (c) and (d).

(D) An elections official may use methods other than those described in subparagraph (A) to obtain a voter's signature on an unsigned identification envelope statement.

(E) If the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the official shall use the signature in the unsigned identification envelope statement, even if returned untimely, to update the voter's signature for future elections, including updating the signature database.

(2) Instructions shall accompany the unsigned identification envelope statement in substantially the following form. The elections official shall insert the date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election where indicated on the form.

"READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THE STATEMENT. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. In order to ensure that your vote by mail ballot will be counted, your statement should be completed and returned as soon as possible, but no later than 5 p.m. on [elections official to insert date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election].

2. You must sign your name on the line above (Voter's Signature).

3. Place the statement into the postage-paid return envelope if it is included with these instructions. If a return envelope is not included with these instructions, use your own mailing envelope addressed to your local elections official. Mail, deliver, or have delivered the completed statement to the elections official. If you mail your completed statement using your own envelope, be sure there is sufficient postage and that the address of the elections official is correct.

4. If you do not wish to send the statement by mail or have it delivered, you may submit your completed statement by facsimile or email transmission to your local elections official, or by other electronic means made available by your local elections official, or submit your completed statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box before the close of the polls on election day."

(3) The notice and instructions shall be translated in all languages required in that county by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 10503).

(f) An elections official shall include a single, combined vote by mail ballot signature verification statement and unsigned ballot identification envelope statement, along with the instructions provided in this section for the completion of the statement, on the elections official's internet website and shall provide the elections official's mailing address, email address, and facsimile transmission number on the internet webpage containing the statement and instructions. The elections official shall accept the combined statement from a voter for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of paragraph (4) of subdivision (d) or subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (e). An elections official may mail the combined statement to a voter pursuant to subdivision (d) or (e) in lieu of the signature verification statement or unsigned ballot identification envelope statement.

(g) A local elections official offering other electronic means for submission of a statement described in this section shall establish appropriate privacy and security protocols that ensure that the information transmitted is received directly and securely by the elections official and is only used for the stated purposes of verifying the signature on the voter's ballot.

(h) A ballot shall not be removed from its identification envelope until the time for processing ballots. A ballot shall not be rejected for cause after the identification envelope has been opened.

(i) For purposes of this section, "certification of the election" means the date the particular elections official submits a certified statement of the results of the election to the governing body pursuant to Section 15372, even if that occurs before the deadline to submit the certified statement of the election results set forth in Section 15372.

(j) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) For a regularly scheduled statewide election, "applicable notification deadline" means 14 calendar days after the election and "applicable receipt deadline" means 22 calendar days after the election.

(2) For an election that is not a regularly scheduled statewide election, "applicable notification deadline" means eight calendar days before certification of the election and "applicable receipt deadline" means two calendar days before certification of the election.

(k) In comparing signatures pursuant to this section, including when using signature verification software or other technology, an elections official shall adhere to all applicable regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State.

(l) An elections official is authorized to use contact information provided on a voter's affidavit of registration to contact a voter for purposes consistent with this section.

(m) An elections official that places a vote by mail ballot drop box, as defined in Section 3025, at their office location to receive ballots, shall also use that drop box after the election in order to receive the form by which the voter provides a signature pursuant to subdivision (d) or (e), as applicable, provided that the drop box used after the election contains a clear and conspicuous label that it is to be used for this limited purpose and not for acceptance of late ballots.

(n) Notwithstanding Section 15 or any other law, if the last day for the performance of any act provided for or required by this section is a holiday, as defined in Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 6700) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, the deadline to perform the act shall not be continued to the next business day.

SEC. 2.5. Section 3019 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

3019. (a) (1) Upon receiving a vote by mail ballot, the elections official shall compare the signature on the identification envelope with either of the following to determine if the signatures compare:

(A) The signature appearing on the voter's affidavit of registration or any previous affidavit of registration of the voter.

(B) The signature appearing on a form issued by an elections official that contains the voter's signature and that is part of the voter's registration record.

(2) All of the following apply to the comparison of signatures pursuant to this section, including the comparison of a voter's signature on a signature verification statement, an unsigned identification envelope statement, or a combined vote by mail ballot signature verification statement and unsigned identification envelope statement, with the signature that is part of the voter's registration record:

(A) A presumption exists that the signature on the identification envelope, signature verification statement, unsigned identification envelope statement, or provisional ballot envelope is the voter's signature and that the vote will be counted.

(B) An exact match is not required for an elections official to determine that a voter's signature is valid. The fact that signatures share similar characteristics is sufficient to determine that a signature is valid.

(C) Except as provided in subparagraph (D), the elections official shall consider explanations for discrepancies between signatures that are specified in regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State. For purposes of this subparagraph, explanations include a variation in signature style over time and the haste with which a signature is written.

(D) When comparing signatures, an elections official shall not review or consider any of the following:

(i) A voter's party preference, race, or ethnicity.

(ii) A voter's identifying information including gender, name, or address, except to confirm the identity of the voter.

(iii) The amount of time spent reviewing a signature.

(E) The elections official may consider characteristics of the written signature that are specified in regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State. For purposes of this subparagraph, characteristics include the slant of the signature, letter formation, and whether the signature is printed or written in cursive.

(F) The elections official may use facsimiles of voters' signatures, provided that the method of preparing and displaying the facsimiles complies with the law.

(G) In comparing signatures pursuant to this section, an elections official may use signature verification technology. If signature verification technology determines that the signatures do not compare, the signature is subject to the additional procedures described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (c).

(H) The variation of a signature caused by the substitution of initials for the first or middle name, or both, is not grounds for the elections official to determine that the signatures do not compare.

(I) A signature made using a mark such as an "X," or made by a signature stamp, shall be presumed valid and shall be accepted if the signature meets the requirements of Section 354.5.

(b) If upon conducting the comparison of signatures pursuant to subdivision (a) the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the elections official shall deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office.

(c) (1) If upon conducting the comparison of signatures pursuant to subdivision (a) the elections official determines that the signature possesses multiple, significant, and obvious differing characteristics when compared to all signatures in the voter's registration record, the signature is subject to the additional procedures described in paragraph (2).

(2) If the elections official makes the determination described in paragraph (1), the signature shall be rejected only if two additional elections officials each find beyond a reasonable doubt that the signature differs in multiple, significant, and obvious respects from all signatures in the voter's registration record. If the officials determine that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened and the ballot shall not be counted. The elections official shall write the cause of the rejection on the face of the identification envelope only after completing the procedures described in subdivision (d).

(d) (1) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (E), on or before the next business day after a determination pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (c) that a voter's signature does not compare pursuant to subdivision (c), but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election, the elections official shall send by first-class mail notice to the voter of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election. The notice shall include a return envelope, with postage paid, for the voter to return a signature verification statement.

(B) If an elections official has a telephone number or email address on file for a voter whose signature does not compare pursuant to subdivision (c), the elections official shall notify the voter by telephone, a text message, or email of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature. If an elections official calls the voter and the voter does not answer, the elections official shall attempt to leave a voicemail message.

(C) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may send additional written notices to a voter identified pursuant to subdivision (c), and may also notify the voter in person or by other means of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature.

(D) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may use any information in a county's election management system, or otherwise in the elections official's possession, for the purpose of notifying the voter of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature.

(E) If it is impracticable under the circumstances for the elections official to send the notice described in subparagraph (A) on or before the next business day, including in the event of technological failure, the elections official shall send the notice as soon as practicable, but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election.

(2) The notice and instructions shall be in substantially the following form. The elections official shall insert the date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election where indicated on the form.

"READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. We have determined that the signature you provided on your vote by mail ballot does not compare with the signature(s) on file in your voter record. In order to ensure that your vote by mail ballot will be counted, the signature verification statement must be completed and returned as soon as possible.
2. The signature verification statement must be received by the elections official of the county where you are registered to vote no later than 5 p.m. on [elections official to insert date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election].
3. You must sign your name where specified on the signature verification statement (Voter's Signature).
4. Place the signature verification statement into the postage-paid return envelope if it is included with these instructions. If a return envelope is not included with these instructions, use your own mailing envelope addressed to your local elections official. Mail, deliver, or have the completed statement delivered to the elections official. If you mail your completed statement using your own envelope, be sure there is sufficient postage and that the address of the elections official is correct.
5. If you do not wish to send the signature verification statement by mail or have it delivered, you may submit your completed statement by email or facsimile transmission to your local elections official, or by other electronic means made available by your local elections official, or submit your completed statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box before the close of the polls on election day."

(3) The notice and instructions shall be translated in all languages required in that county by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 10503).

(4) The elections official shall not reject a vote by mail ballot identified pursuant to subdivision (c) if each of the following conditions are satisfied:

(A) The voter delivers, in person, by mail, by fax, by email, or by other means, a signature verification statement signed by the voter and the elections official receives the statement no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election, or the voter, before the close of the polls on election day, completes and submits a signature verification statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box.

(B) Upon receipt of the signature verification statement, the elections official shall compare the signature on the statement with the signature on file in the voter's record. The elections official shall not delay the comparison until later in the canvass.

(i) If upon conducting the comparison of signatures the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the elections official shall deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office.

(ii) If, under the standards and procedures of subdivision (c), a determination is made that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened and the ballot shall not be counted. The elections official shall write the cause of the rejection on the face of the identification envelope.

(5) The signature verification statement shall be in substantially the following form and may be included on the same page as the notice and instructions specified in paragraph (2):

"SIGNATURE VERIFICATION STATEMENT

I, am a registered voter of _____ County,

State of California. I declare under penalty of perjury that I received and returned a vote by mail ballot. I am a resident of the precinct in which I have voted, and I am the person whose name appears on the vote by mail ballot envelope. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this statement means that my vote by mail ballot will be invalidated.

Voter's Signature

Address"

(6) If the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the official shall use the signature in the signature verification statement, even if returned untimely, to update the voter's signature for future elections, including updating the signature database.

(7) A voter may work with a nongovernmental entity to complete the requirements of this subdivision.

(8) The signature verification statement shall contain, where the voter signs, a statement that the county elections official is required to compare the voter's signature appearing on the signature verification statement with the signatures appearing in the voter's registration record, which may include the signature appearing on the voter's driver's license or state identification card.

(e) (1) (A) Notwithstanding any other law, if an elections official determines that a voter has failed to sign the identification envelope, the elections official shall not reject the vote by mail ballot if the voter does any of the following:

(i) Signs the identification envelope at the office of the elections official during regular business hours no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election.

(ii) No later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election, completes and submits an unsigned identification envelope statement in substantially the following form:

"UNSIGNED IDENTIFICATION ENVELOPE STATEMENT

I, am a registered voter of _____ County,

State of California. I declare under penalty of perjury that I received and returned a vote by mail ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I am a resident of the precinct in which I have voted, and I am the person whose name appears on the vote by mail ballot envelope. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this statement means that my vote by mail ballot will be invalidated.

Voter's Signature

Address"

(iii) Before the close of the polls on election day, completes and submits an unsigned identification envelope statement, in the form described in clause (ii), to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box.

(B) (i) Except as provided in clause (v), or before the next business day after discovering that a voter has failed to sign the identification envelope, but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election, the elections official shall send by first-class mail notice and instructions to the voter of the opportunity to provide a signature no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the applicable receipt deadline after the election. The notice shall include a return envelope, with postage paid, for the voter to return the unsigned identification envelope statement.

(ii) If an elections official has a telephone number or email address on file for a voter who has failed to sign the identification envelope, the elections official shall notify the voter by telephone, a text message, or email of the opportunity to provide a signature. If an elections official calls the voter and the voter does not answer, the elections official shall attempt to leave a voicemail message.

(iii) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may send additional written notices to a voter identified pursuant to this subdivision, and may also notify the voter in person or by other means of the opportunity to provide a signature.

(iv) Unless required pursuant to Section 3026, the elections official may use any information in the county's election management system, or otherwise in the elections official's possession, for the purpose of notifying the voter of the opportunity to provide a signature.

(v) If it is impracticable under the circumstances for the elections official to send the notice described in clause (i) on or before the next business day, including in the event of technological failure, the elections official shall send the notice as soon as practicable, but not later than the applicable notification deadline after the election.

(C) If timely submitted, the elections official shall accept any completed unsigned identification envelope statement. Upon receipt of the unsigned identification envelope statement, the elections official shall compare the voter's signature on the statement in the manner provided by this section. The elections official shall not delay the comparison until later in the canvass.

(i) If the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the elections official shall attach the unsigned identification envelope statement to the identification envelope and deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office.

(ii) If, under the standards and procedures of subdivision (c), a determination is made that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened and the elections official shall provide notice to the voter pursuant to subdivisions (c) and (d).

(D) An elections official may use methods other than those described in subparagraph (A) to obtain a voter's signature on an unsigned identification envelope statement.

(E) If the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the official shall use the signature in the unsigned identification envelope statement, even if returned untimely, to update the voter's signature for future elections, including updating the signature database.

(2) Instructions shall accompany the unsigned identification envelope statement in substantially the following form. The elections official shall insert the date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election where indicated on the form.

"READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THE STATEMENT. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. In order to ensure that your vote by mail ballot will be counted, your statement should be completed and returned as soon as possible, but no later than 5 p.m. on [elections official to insert date of the applicable receipt deadline after the election].

2. You must sign your name on the line above (Voter's Signature).

3. Place the statement into the postage-paid return envelope if it is included with these instructions. If a return envelope is not included with these instructions, use your own mailing envelope addressed to your local elections official. Mail, deliver, or have delivered the completed statement to the elections official. If you mail your completed statement using your own envelope, be sure there is sufficient postage and that the address of the elections official is correct.

4. If you do not wish to send the statement by mail or have it delivered, you may submit your completed statement by facsimile or email transmission to your local elections official, or by other electronic means made available by your local elections official, or submit your completed statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot dropoff box before the close of the polls on election day."

(3) The notice and instructions shall be translated in all languages required in that county by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Sec. 10503).

(4) A voter may work with a nongovernmental entity to complete the requirements of this subdivision.

(5) The identification envelope statement shall contain, where the voter signs, a statement that the county elections official is required to compare the voter's signature appearing on the identification envelope statement with the signatures appearing in the voter's registration record, which may include the signature appearing on the voter's driver's license or state identification card.

(f) The Secretary of State shall publish on their internet website a single, combined vote by mail ballot signature verification statement and unsigned ballot identification envelope statement. An elections official shall include the combined statement developed by the Secretary of State, or a combined statement developed by the elections official that meets the requirements of this section, along with the instructions provided in this section for the completion of the statement, on the elections official's internet website and shall provide the elections official's mailing address, email address, and facsimile transmission number on the internet webpage containing the statement and instructions. The elections official shall accept the combined statement from a voter for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of paragraph (4) of subdivision (d) or subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (e). An elections official may mail the combined statement to a voter pursuant to subdivision (d) or (e) in lieu of the signature verification statement or unsigned ballot identification envelope statement.

(g) A local elections official offering other electronic means for submission of a statement described in this section shall establish appropriate privacy and security protocols that ensure that the information transmitted is received directly and securely by the elections official and is only used for the stated purposes of verifying the signature on the voter's ballot.

(h) A ballot shall not be removed from its identification envelope until the time for processing ballots. A ballot shall not be rejected for cause after the identification envelope has been opened.

(i) For purposes of this section, "certification of the election" means the date the particular elections official submits a certified statement of the results of the election to the governing body pursuant to Section 15372, even if that occurs before the deadline to submit the certified statement of the election results set forth in Section 15372.

(j) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) For a regularly scheduled statewide election, "applicable notification deadline" means 14 calendar days after the election and "applicable receipt deadline" means 22 calendar days after the election.

(2) For an election that is not a regularly scheduled statewide election, "applicable notification deadline" means eight calendar days before certification of the election and "applicable receipt deadline" means two calendar days before certification of the election.

(k) In comparing signatures pursuant to this section, including when using signature verification software or other technology, an elections official shall adhere to all applicable regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State.

(l) An elections official is authorized to use contact information provided on a voter's affidavit of registration to contact a voter for purposes consistent with this section.

(m) If an elections official establishes procedures that the official uses when comparing signatures pursuant to this section, the elections official shall post the procedures used on their internet website or provide them upon request at their office. In accordance with subdivision (k), any such procedures shall adhere to regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State.

(n) An elections official shall accept a form in satisfaction of the requirements of subdivision (d) or (e) if the form was developed by the Secretary of State or by an elections official pursuant to subdivision (d), (e), or (f). An elections official shall not accept a form created by any individual, organization, or entity other than the Secretary of State or an elections official.

(o) An elections official that places a vote by mail ballot drop box, as defined in Section 3025, at their office location to receive ballots, shall also use that drop box after the election in order to receive the form by which the voter provides a signature pursuant to subdivision (d) or (e), as applicable, provided that the drop box used after the election contains a clear and conspicuous label that it is to be used for this limited purpose and not for acceptance of late ballots.

(p) Notwithstanding Section 15 or any other law, if the last day for the performance of any act provided for or required by this section is a holiday, as defined in Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 6700) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, the deadline to perform the act shall not be continued to the next business day.

SEC. 3. Section 3019.7 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

3019.7. (a) The Secretary of State shall maintain a system to allow a vote by mail voter to track the voter's vote by mail ballot through the mail system and as the vote by mail ballot is processed by the county elections official. A county elections official shall use this system unless the county makes available to voters a different vote by mail ballot tracking system that meets or exceeds the level of service provided by the Secretary of State's system. The system shall, at a minimum, be accessible to voters with disabilities and allow a voter to register to receive information via email or text message from the county elections official about the status of the voter's vote by mail ballot, including all of the following information:

(1) A notification when the ballot has been delivered by the county elections official to the United States Postal Service.

(2) A notification of the date, based on information from the United States Postal Service, that the voter's ballot is expected to be delivered to the voter.

(3) A notification if the voter's ballot is returned as undeliverable to the county elections official by the United States Postal Service.

(4) A notification when the voter's completed ballot has been received by the county elections official.

(5) A notification that the voter's completed ballot has been counted, or, if the ballot cannot be counted, a notification of the reason why the ballot could not be counted and instructions of any steps that the voter can take in order to have the ballot counted. If the ballot cannot be counted because the voter's signature did not compare or the identification envelope is missing a signature, as described in subdivisions (c) and (e) of Section 3019, and the voter has opted in to receive notifications by text or email, the notification shall include an internet website link to the required form for verifying or providing a signature, as applicable, and instructions for completion.

(6) A reminder of the deadline for the voter to return the voter's ballot if the county elections official has not received a voter's completed ballot by specified dates as determined by the county elections official.

(b) The Secretary of State shall make the system maintained pursuant to subdivision (a) available for use by each county. A county elections official may use the system for the purpose of complying with Section 3019.5.

SEC. 4. Section 15301 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

15301. (a) The canvass shall commence no later than the Thursday following the election, shall be open to the public, and, for state or statewide elections, shall result in a report of results to the Secretary of State.

(b) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the canvass shall be continued daily, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays excepted, for not less than six hours each day until completed.

(2) If the only ballots that the elections official has left to count as part of the official canvass are vote by mail ballots for which a voter has been provided, or will be provided, the opportunity to verify or to provide their signature pursuant to subdivision (d) or

(e) of Section 3019, as applicable, and the elections official does not need to conduct the official canvass for at least six hours per day in order to meet the deadline for certification of results pursuant to this section and Section 15372, the official canvass may be conducted for fewer than six hours per day until completed.

SEC. 5. Section 1.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 2194 of the Elections Code proposed by both this bill and Assembly Bill 1392. That section of this bill shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2026, (2) each bill amends Section 2194 of the Elections Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after Assembly Bill 1392, in which case Section 1 of this bill shall not become operative.

SEC. 6. Section 2.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 3019 of the Elections Code proposed by both this bill and Senate Bill 3. That section of this bill shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2026, (2) each bill amends Section 3019 of the Elections Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after Senate Bill 3, in which case Section 2 of this bill shall not become operative.

SEC. 7. 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.