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SB-3 Elections: signature verification and results. (2025-2026)

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Senate Bill No. 3

CHAPTER 307

An act to amend Sections 3011, 3019, 15104, and 15306 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

SB 3, Cervantes. Elections: signature verification and results.

Existing law requires an elections official, upon receiving a vote by mail ballot, to compare the signature on the identification envelope with either the signature appearing on the voter's affidavit or other signature appearing on a form that is part of the voter's registration record. Existing law prohibits an elections official from reviewing or considering a voter's party preference, race, or ethnicity when comparing signatures. Existing law requires an elections official, if it is determined that the signatures do not compare, to notify the voter of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature, as specified. Existing law prohibits an elections official from rejecting a vote by mail ballot with signatures that do not compare if the voter delivers a signature verification statement and the signature on the verification statement compares with the signature on file in the voter's record. Existing law prohibits an elections official from rejecting a vote by mail ballot with an unsigned identification envelope if, no later than 5 p.m. two days prior to the election, the voter signs the envelope at the office of the elections official or completes and submits an unsigned identification envelope statement, as specified.

This bill would additionally prohibit an elections official, when comparing signatures, from considering a voter's identifying information, including gender, name, and address, and the amount of time spent reviewing a signature. The bill would require an elections official to notify the voter when the signatures do not compare after a specified determination is made that the signatures differ. The bill would authorize a voter to work with a nongovernmental entity to complete a signature verification statement and unsigned envelope statement. The bill would require a signature verification statement and unsigned envelope statement to contain a statement that the county elections official is required to compare the voter's signature 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. The bill would require the Secretary of State to publish on their internet website a single, combined vote by mail ballot signature verification statement and unsigned ballot identification envelope statement. The bill would require an elections official to accept a form for a signature verification statement or unsigned ballot identification envelope statement if the form was developed by the Secretary of State or an elections official, but would prohibit an elections official from accepting a form created by any other individual, organization, or entity.

Existing law permits a member of the county grand jury, and at least one member each of the Republican county central committee, the Democratic county central committee, and of any other party with a candidate on the ballot, and any other interested organization, to observe and challenge the manner in which vote by mail ballots are handled. Existing law requires these individuals be allowed sufficiently close access to enable them to observe the vote by mail ballot return envelopes and the

signatures thereon and challenge whether established procedures are being followed for, among other things, verifying signatures on the vote by mail return envelopes.

This bill would additionally allow vote by mail observers to observe and challenge the manner in which those individuals handling vote by mail ballots are following procedures for verifying signatures on signature verification statements and unsigned envelope statements.

Existing law requires elections officials, beginning no later than the Thursday following an election, to post updated information regarding an election on their internet website at least once per week until publication of the certified statement of results or until the only ballots left to count are vote by mail ballots for which a voter has the opportunity either to verify or provide their signature. Existing law requires the information at a minimum include updated results for any candidate for office or measure appearing on the ballot, the number of ballots processed and an estimated number of outstanding unprocessed ballots, according to specified categories, and the date and time when it is expected that the next results will be posted.

This bill would instead require an elections official, beginning no later than the Thursday following an election, to post updated information regarding the election on their internet website at least two times by the following Thursday and at least twice a week thereafter until publication of the certified statement of results or until the only ballots left to count are vote by mail ballots for which a voter has the opportunity either to verify or provide their signature. The bill would revise the categories for reporting the number of ballots processed and estimated number of outstanding ballots remaining unprocessed. The bill would require the date and time when it is expected that the next results will be posted to be on the homepage of an elections official's internet website or on the stand-alone webpage for the specific election on an elections official's internet website. The bill would specify that posting a hyperlink to a separate file does not satisfy the requirements of these provisions.

This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 3019 of the Elections Code proposed by AB 827 to be operative only if this bill and AB 827 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 15104 of the Elections Code proposed by AB 16 to be operative only if this bill and AB 16 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

By imposing new duties on local elections officials, this 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.

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

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

SECTION 1. Section 3011 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

3011. (a) The identification envelope shall contain all of the following:

- (1) A declaration, under penalty of perjury, stating that the voter resides within the precinct in which the voter is voting and is the person whose name appears on the envelope.
- (2) The signature of the voter.
- (3) The residence address of the voter as shown on the affidavit of registration.
- (4) The date of signing.
- (5) A notice that the envelope contains an official ballot and is to be opened only by the canvassing board.
- (6) A warning plainly stamped or printed on it that voting twice constitutes a crime.
- (7) A warning plainly stamped or printed on it that the voter must sign the envelope in the voter's own handwriting in order for the ballot to be counted.
- (8) A statement that the voter has neither voted nor intends to vote a ballot from any other jurisdiction for the same election.
- (9) The name and signature of the person authorized by the voter to return the vote by mail ballot pursuant to Section 3017.

(10) A statement next to where the voter signs that the county elections official is required to compare the voter's signature appearing on the identification envelope 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.

(b) Except at a primary election for partisan office, and notwithstanding any other provision of law, the voter's party preference may not be stamped or printed on the identification envelope.

(c) Notwithstanding paragraph (9) of subdivision (a), a ballot shall not be disqualified solely because the person authorized to return it did not provide on the identification envelope their name or signature.

(d) County elections officials may continue to use existing supplies prior to printing new identification envelopes that reflect the changes made to this section by the act adding this subdivision.

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 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 eight days prior to the certification of 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. two days prior to the certification of 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 eight days prior to the certification of the election.

(2) The notice and instructions shall be in substantially the following 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. two days prior to certification of 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 is 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. two days prior to the certification of 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.

(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. two days prior to the certification of the election.

(ii) No later than 5 p.m. two days prior to the certification of 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 eight days prior to the certification of 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. two days

prior to the certification of 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 eight days prior to the certification of 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.

(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:

"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. two days prior to the certification of 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, along with the instructions provided in this section for the completion of the 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, 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 web page 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) 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.

(k) 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.

(l) 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 (j), any such procedures shall adhere to regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State.

(m) 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.

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 15104 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

15104. (a) The processing of vote by mail ballot return envelopes, and the processing and counting of vote by mail ballots, shall be open to the public, both prior to and after the election.

(b) A member of the county grand jury, and at least one member each of the Republican county central committee, the Democratic county central committee, and of any other party with a candidate on the ballot, and any other interested organization, shall be permitted to observe and challenge the manner in which the vote by mail ballots are handled, from the processing of vote by mail ballot return envelopes through the counting and disposition of the ballots.

(c) The elections official shall notify vote by mail voter observers and the public at least 48 hours in advance of the dates, times, and places where vote by mail ballots will be processed and counted.

(d) Notwithstanding paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 2194, vote by mail voter observers shall be allowed sufficiently close access to enable them to observe the vote by mail ballot return envelopes and the signatures thereon and challenge whether those individuals handling vote by mail ballots are following established procedures, including all of the following:

- (1) Verifying signatures on the vote by mail ballot return envelopes by comparing them to voter registration information.
- (2) Duplicating accurately damaged or defective ballots.
- (3) Securing vote by mail ballots to prevent tampering with them before they are counted on election day.
- (4) Verifying signatures on statements completed pursuant to subdivisions (d) and (e) of Section 3019.

(e) A vote by mail voter observer shall not interfere with the orderly processing of vote by mail ballot return envelopes or the processing and counting of vote by mail ballots, including the touching or handling of the ballots.

SEC. 3.5. Section 15104 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

15104. (a) The processing of vote by mail ballot return envelopes, and the processing and counting of vote by mail ballots, shall be open to the public, both prior to and after the election.

(b) A member of the county grand jury, and at least one member each of the Republican county central committee, the Democratic county central committee, and of any other party with a candidate on the ballot, and any other interested organization, shall be permitted to observe and challenge the manner in which the vote by mail ballots are handled, from the processing of vote by mail ballot return envelopes through the counting and disposition of the ballots.

(c) The elections official shall notify vote by mail voter observers and the public at least 48 hours in advance of the dates, times, and places where vote by mail ballots will be processed and counted.

(d) Notwithstanding paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 2194, vote by mail voter observers shall be allowed sufficiently close access to enable them to observe the vote by mail ballot return envelopes and the signatures thereon and challenge whether those individuals handling vote by mail ballots are following established procedures, including all of the following:

- (1) Verifying signatures on the vote by mail ballot return envelopes by comparing them to voter registration information.
- (2) Duplicating accurately damaged or defective ballots.
- (3) Securing vote by mail ballots to prevent tampering with them before they are counted.
- (4) Verifying signatures on statements completed pursuant to subdivisions (d) and (e) of Section 3019.

(e) A vote by mail voter observer shall not interfere with the orderly processing of vote by mail ballot return envelopes or the processing and counting of vote by mail ballots, including the touching or handling of the ballots.

SEC. 4. Section 15306 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

15306. (a) Beginning no later than the Thursday following an election, and until the time specified in subdivision (b), an elections official shall post updated information regarding the election on their internet website at least two times by the following Thursday and at least twice a week thereafter. The updates shall include at least the following information:

- (1) Updated results for any candidate or measure appearing on the ballot.
- (2) The number of ballots processed and an estimated number of outstanding ballots remaining unprocessed using the unprocessed ballot categories prescribed by the Secretary of State pursuant to Section 15305. This information shall be posted on either the homepage of an election official's internet website or on the stand-alone webpage for the specific election on an elections official's internet website. Posting a hyperlink to a separate file containing this information does not satisfy the requirements of this subdivision.
- (3) The date and time when it is expected that the next results will be posted. This information shall be posted on the homepage of an elections official's internet website, on the stand-alone webpage for the specific election on an elections official's internet website, or on the stand-alone website that contains updated election results for the specific election pursuant to paragraph (1). Posting a hyperlink to a separate file containing this information does not satisfy the requirements of this subdivision.

(b) The elections official may stop posting the results described in subdivision (a) when either of the following occurs:

- (1) A certified statement of results is published pursuant to Section 15372.
- (2) The only ballots left to count are vote by mail ballots for which a voter has the opportunity either to verify their signature pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 3019 or to provide their signature pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 3019. If the elections official stops posting results for this reason, they shall post a notice stating this reason on their internet website.

(c) The requirements of this section are in addition to any other duty to report or publish information required of the elections official pursuant to this division or any other law.

SEC. 5. Section 2.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 3019 of the Elections Code proposed by both this bill and Assembly Bill 827. 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 Assembly Bill 827, in which case Section 2 of this bill shall not become operative.

SEC. 6. Section 3.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 15104 of the Elections Code proposed by both this bill and Assembly Bill 16. 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 15104 of the Elections Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after Assembly Bill 16, in which case Section 3 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.