



June 29, 2026

Hon. Rob Bonta
Attorney General
1300 I Street, 17th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

Attention: Ms. Anabel Renteria
Initiative Coordinator

Dear Attorney General Bonta:

Pursuant to Election Code Section 9005, we have reviewed a proposed initiative related to primary elections in California (A.G. File No. 26-0004).

Background

Elections Administration. County elections officials administer most elections in California. As part of this work, they print and mail ballots and other voting materials to registered voters. Some state agencies also have workload related to voting. For example, the Secretary of State oversees elections across the state and prepares and mails the state *Voter Information Guide*.

Voter Registration and Party Affiliation. In order to vote, people first must register with elections officials. People register to vote in the county where they live. When registering to vote, people can choose whether to become a member of a political party or to not affiliate with a political party as a “no party preference” voter.

Primary and General Elections. The state holds two scheduled statewide elections every two years: a primary election in either March or June, depending on the year, and a general election in November. Although ballots in these elections may include local elective offices and state and local ballot measures, a key purpose of these scheduled elections is for voters to select their representatives for state and federal elective office. The primary election is used to narrow the list of candidates who appear on the general election ballot for state and federal elective offices. At the general elections, the candidate receiving the most votes assumes the state or federal elective office at the start of the new term of office.

Primary Elections in California Today: Top Two Primary. The state has used different types of primary election systems over the decades. The primary system that exists today for all


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partisan state and federal elective offices, other than U.S. President, was established by Proposition 14 (2010) and went into effect in 2011. This primary system is referred to as a top two primary. In this primary, all candidates for a given office, regardless of party, appear on a single primary ballot. All registered voters, regardless of their own party registration, may vote for any candidate. The two candidates with the most votes, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election.

Proposal

Repeal Top Two Primary System. The measure would repeal the top two primary system established by Proposition 14. Instead of the two candidates with the most votes advancing to the general election regardless of their party, each party's candidate who receives the most votes in the primary election would advance to the general election ballot. This could result in more than two candidates appearing on the general election ballot for an office because there are more than two political parties. Subsequent legislative action would be necessary to establish the statutory framework needed to implement the new system.

Fiscal Effect

Increased Costs. This measure would change how elections officials prepare, print, and mail ballot materials at both the primary and general elections. These changes would increase state and local elections officials' costs associated with primary and general elections. The magnitude of these costs would depend on future decisions by political parties, the Legislature, and voters. As such, the fiscal effect is unknown.

Summary of Major Fiscal Effects. The measure would have the following major fiscal effects.

- Unknown, but likely increased state and local government costs to administer elections.

Sincerely,

for Gabriel Petek
Legislative Analyst

for Joe Stephenshaw
Director of Finance