

Governor Signs Voter Equity Bill Senator Josh Becker to Ensure a Statewide Standard for Mail-In Ballot Signature Verification

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation by Senator Josh Becker today to implement a statewide standard for signature verification of mail-in ballots, timely outreach to voters whose ballots are rejected, and periodic reporting about the nature of those rejections.

“The legislation Governor Newsom signed today strengthens elections integrity throughout California,” said Senator Becker, D-Peninsula. “My [Senate Bill 503](#) gives confidence to all Californians that every valid vote is counted and that all our counties follow uniform practices for signature verification of mail-in ballots.”

SB 503 codifies and builds on emergency measures that the California Secretary of State’s Office put in place specifically for the November 2020 general election, in which nearly 87% of the votes were cast by mail. In the March 2020 primary, 72% of the ballots were cast by mail and more than 100,000 were rejected.

“Challenged signatures disproportionately impact California voters with limited English proficiency, voters living with disabilities, first-time and aging voters, and voters of color,” said Senator Becker. “SB 503 is about building on what we know works to ensure transparency and fairness.”

Senator Becker credited work by members of the Election Law Project student group at his alma mater, Stanford Law School, for inspiring his legislation. According to a [report](#) published in April 2020, the project found disparities among more than 30 California counties on how signatures were evaluated and how challenged signatures were addressed.

The senator worked closely with the Secretary of State’s Office in crafting his legislation. SB 503 takes effect January 1, 2022.

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