

## Vote - It's Our Civic Responsibility

October 2007

The U.S. Constitution places the power to govern our country in the hands of our elected representatives. But this power is temporarily returned to us, the people, at regular intervals - each election day. Our Constitution discusses the election process at least nine times, and its authors set the electoral responsibility squarely on the shoulders of each citizen. Our founding fathers clearly intended that we should accept this responsibility without hesitation and dutifully exercise it by electing suitable representatives and officers. To ignore this responsibility is to declare to our founding fathers that they should not have been so foolish as to entrust us with the maintenance of our freedoms. Ignoring our responsibility to vote is, by default, to vote for tyranny.

California has some 37 million residents, all of whom are affected by the outcome of our elections. Of those 37 million, some 22 million are eligible to register to vote. But, fewer than 60% (around 13 million) of everyone in California who are eligible to register to vote actually do vote. (Every citizen of the United States, who is 18 years old or older, a legal resident of California, and not in prison or on parole for the conviction of a felony, is eligible to vote.)

**Three statewide election days are scheduled in 2008 in California: The Presidential primary, the Statewide primary, and the Fall General and Presidential election.**

This is the first time in California that the presidential primary will be held separately from the statewide primary. And it is the first time that it will have been held this early in the year.

(See "General Information" at the end of this article for information applicable to all elections in California.)

### **FIRST Election Day - February 5th, Presidential Primary:**

Candidates seeking their party's nomination for U.S. President will be on this ballot. There will be no other candidates for national or statewide offices on this ballot. However, there will be statewide Initiatives on this ballot.

### **Important dates for February 5th Presidential Primary:**

- January 22, 2008- deadline to register to vote on February 5, 2008.
- January 29, 2008 - last day County Elections Offices can receive requests for *absentee ballots* for the February 5, 2008 Presidential Primary Election.
- February 5, 2008 - Election Day (8:00 pm is the deadline for *absentee ballots* to be received by Election officials.)

**SECOND Election Day - June 3, 2008 Statewide Primary Election** for national (except president), statewide, and local candidates; statewide Ballot Initiatives; and possibly other local measures.

### **Important dates for June 3rd election:**

- May 19, 2008 - deadline to register to vote on June 3, 2008.
- May 27, 2008 - last day County Elections Offices can receive requests for *absentee ballots* for the June 3, 2008 Statewide Primary Election.
- June 3, 2008 - Election Day (8:00 pm is the deadline for *absentee ballots* to be received by Election officials.)

**THIRD Election Day - November 4, 2008 General (national, state, and local candidates) and Presidential Election:**

### **Important dates for November 4th election:**

- October 20, 2008 - Deadline to register to vote on November 4, 2008.
- October 28, 2008 - last day County Elections Offices can receive requests for *absentee ballots* for the November 4, 2008 General and Presidential Election.
- November 4, 2008 - Election Day (8:00 pm is the deadline for *absentee ballots* to be received by Election officials.)

## **General Information**

### Registration:

You must be registered to vote at your current address at least 15 days prior to an election in order to vote in that election. However, once you are registered, you will remain on the rolls and be eligible to vote in all future elections until you move or otherwise become ineligible.

You or your eligible children should (re)register if:

- you have moved or changed your name since you last registered to vote
- you would like to change your party affiliation
- you are unsure if you are properly registered
- you or your child will turn 18 years old by Election Day

To register to vote, you need to complete and sign a *Voter Registration Form* and mail or deliver it to your County Elections Official (see below).

*Voter Registration Forms* are available at a number of locations, among which are:

- County Election Offices
- Post Offices
- Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV's)
- City Clerks Offices
- Public Libraries
- Chambers of Commerce

### **Absentee Ballots:**

Voting by absentee ballot allows you to take your time when marking your ballot. It also assures you that no last minute emergency will keep you from casting your important vote. To request an *absentee ballot*, fill in the *absentee ballot* request on the back of your *Sample Ballot*. You can request Permanent Absentee Voter status on this same form.

Another way of obtaining an *absentee ballot* is to request one by letter or fax from your County Elections Office (see "County Elections Office" below). When making your request, include the following information:

1. A short statement saying that you are requesting an *absentee ballot*

2. The name and date of the election for which you are applying (e.g., February 5, 2008, Presidential Primary, etc.)
3. Your name as you are registered to vote
4. Your legal (physical) address, as registered to vote
5. The address to which you want the *absentee ballot* mailed
6. The date you are mailing this request for an *absentee ballot*
7. Your signature

If you forget to mail in your *absentee ballot* in time for it to arrive at your County Elections Office by election day, you can hand deliver it to your local polling place, any other polling place in the county in which you are registered, or to your County Elections Office, as long as they receive it before 8 pm on election day. If you need someone else to hand deliver your *absentee ballot*, you may authorize a relative to do so by filling out the appropriate spot on the envelope accompanying the *absentee ballot*.

### **County Elections Office:**

Your County Elections Officer can answer any additional questions about your registration, *absentee ballots*, or voting in general. You can locate your County Elections Office very easily at the California Secretary of State's web site, [www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections\\_d.htm](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_d.htm).

### **Slate Mailers:**

Beware of Slate Mailers! "Slate Mailers" are election pieces that list a number of candidates and/or propositions to vote for or against. Some slates are legitimate and very helpful, but many are deliberately designed to deceive voters. For example, one slate in the Primary 2000 election looked like it came from the California Republican Party, but it had 6 ballot propositions listed with positions opposite of the party. Any candidates or propositions with an asterisk by them have paid to advertise on that slate. You may want to consider throwing slate mailers out unless you are convinced that you know the philosophy of the people who produced them and you agree with that philosophy.

Our non-profit status prevents us from engaging in partisan politics or recommending candidates for public office.