

AGN. NO.

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

May 5, 2015

Support of Assembly Bill 1461 – California New Motor Voter Act

As the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Act) is celebrated, it is important that the Board of Supervisors (Board) continually look to improve and modernize the voting process in ways that ensure compliance with the spirit and intent of the Act. One of the most fundamental components of the voting process is the registration and enfranchisement of voters, yet it still remains a significant barrier to achieving higher levels of participation in the democratic system.

In 2014, the State of California (State) ranked 38th in voter registration with nearly 7 million Californians eligible to vote but not registered, with approximately 1.2 million residing in Los Angeles County. The State is also seeking to address historically low voter turnout, and in 2014 it ranked 43rd in voter participation with Los Angeles County recording the lowest turnout of any county in the State at roughly 25%.

Assembly Bill 1461 (Gonzalez, Alejo, and McCarty), which is sponsored by Secretary of State Alex Padilla (SOS), seeks to increase the opportunities for California residents to participate in the elections process by streamlining and enhancing voter

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registration. The current motor voter system in California, which is over two decades old, is an inefficient, paper-based voter registration process coordinated and managed between the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the SOS. The existing program has arguably never achieved the full intent established at its inception over 20 years ago.

AB 1461 would enhance the current process by using an electronic data transfer directly from the DMV to the SOS to automatically place persons who are obtaining or renewing a driver's license or State identification card and who meet the minimum qualifications to vote on the State's active voter roll.

This new electronic process would greatly benefit the County's Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) who is currently tasked with the upkeep of voter files. This new electronic system would mitigate multiple challenges associated with maintaining accurate voter information, including illegible handwriting, inaccurate voter information, operator error, and data duplication.

The new electronic process created by AB 1461 could also potentially free RR/CC resources that are currently focused on the manual registration processes, enabling a greater emphasis and allocation of resources on voter outreach and education, which could lead to better voter turnout in upcoming elections.

Language in AB 1461 prohibits the transfer of non-citizen information to the SOS to safeguard the integrity of the voter eligibility determination process. Additionally, there will be a method that allows persons to select their political party preference or to decline to be registered altogether. AB 1461 is a positive direction for the State and is aligned with the

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current emphasis on decreasing administrative barriers to voting and increasing voter participation, which are hallmarks of the Voting Rights Act.

**I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DIRECT THE INTERIM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO:**

- Instruct Los Angeles County's Sacramento advocates to support AB 1461.

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(VH)