



# COALITION OF BAY AREA ELECTION OFFICIALS

bayareavotes.org

 Bay Area Votes

## FACT SHEET

### Topic: Voting by Mail

#### VBM (Vote by Mail) Has Been Around for Over 20 Years

- The permanent VBM program has been in place since 2002. Over the past 20 years, the percentage of voters that vote by mail has evolved from 27.08% (2002) to 86.72% (2020). Voters have demonstrated that by-and-large, they prefer voting by mail.
- Today, AB37 requires counties to mail a ballot to every active, registered voter in California, while still retaining the option to vote in person.
- Over the past 20 years, the procedures to safeguard VBM voting and make voting easier have matured into a robust, secure process.

#### VBM Essentials: Sign, Seal, Deliver

- **Sign:** Remember to sign your VBM return envelope before sending it. It must be signed in order to be counted. Your signature must compare to your signature on file with us, which is often the signature on your driver's license.
- **Deliver:** You can return your VBM ballot by mail, by VBM Drop Box, or personally at any in-person voting location on or before Election Day. Check with your local election office for more information.

- Voters may designate an individual to return their VBM ballot. Be sure it is someone you know and trust. He or she should sign the appropriate space on the return envelope.

#### VBM is Safe and Secure

- VBM is a highly regulated process. Systematic fraud is nearly impossible due to the number of multiple factors, checkpoints, people, and systems that coordinate to keep your vote safe.
- Safeguards are in place to eliminate or prevent fraud. Ballots cannot be forwarded by the USPS. If you move and you don't update your address, your ballot will be returned to the election office, and you will have to take action. You will need to vote in person or contact your local elections office for a replacement ballot.
- VBM ballot return envelopes are assigned unique ID numbers, including re-issued ballots, to ensure that voters only vote once.
- There is a paper ballot for every vote cast. Even our online or accessible systems produce a paper record of votes. This helps with multiple audit functions.
- **Ballot Tracking:** Voters can track their VBM ballot to know when it is mailed, received, and processed by the county elections office. This provides a voter

greater transparency on where their ballot is during the election process. Sign up at the Secretary of State's office (<https://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov>).

- VBM ballots are retrieved with strict chain-of-custody procedures and two-person teams pick up ballots from the post office or VBM ballot drop boxes.
- Signature Comparison: VBM ballot envelopes are required to be signature verified to the voters' signatures on file.
- Cure Process: Letters are sent to voters who failed to sign the return envelope or whose signatures do not compare, to give the voter the opportunity to "cure" their VBM challenge status.
- Election vote tabulation systems and voting equipment are not connected to the internet.
- Safeguards are in place to prevent voting twice, such as voting by mail and then trying to vote in person on Election Day. Only the first ballot received is counted and systems are in place to notify the polling place if a voter has already returned a VBM ballot.
- Safeguards also detect if a voter voted twice: first in one county and then in another county.
- Elections operations use advanced auditing measures during the canvass to assure systems tallied the votes correctly.

## **VBM is Convenient**

- VBM ballots are mailed at least 29 days before the election, allowing ample time for the voter to study the issues and vote.
- Voters don't have to take time off from work to vote on Election Day.
- VBM return envelopes come with pre-paid postage. No stamps are needed.
- RAVBM (Remote Accessible Vote by Mail): If you need accessibility features to vote your VBM ballot, you are out of state,

or it is too late to receive a ballot in the mail, you can request a Remote Accessible VBM ballot which will give you access to an online secure ballot marking system.

## **VBM Increases Voter Turnout**

- There has been an increase in turnout everywhere VBM has been implemented.

## **VBM Does Not Benefit One Party Over Another**

- All studies show that VBM benefits all parties and does not discriminate.

## **Top Reasons Why VBM Ballots are Not Counted**

- The VBM return envelope is not signed.
- The signature on the envelope does not compare to the signature on file.
- The ballot is not returned in the VBM return envelope.
- There is no ballot inside the VBM return envelope.