

Date of Hearing: May 10, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
HR 12 (Gomez) – As Amended May 3, 2017

SUBJECT: Voter education

SUMMARY: Requests that during the next revision of the history-social science curriculum framework, the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) include content on the importance of preregistering to vote. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States that it is currently required that voter education information, including the importance of registering to vote, how to register to vote, and the requirements to qualify as eligible to register to vote, be included in the American government and civics curriculum at the high school level.
- 2) States that many high school pupils have not taken advantage of voter preregistration, in which eligible 16-year-old and 17-year-old Californians are encouraged to participate.
- 3) States that voting among California's youth is strikingly lower than in other age groups, as the 18 to 29, age group made up 21.2 percent of the eligible voting population in 2012, but made up 15.4 percent of voters, compared to the group aged 65 years of age and older, who made up 19.1 percent of the eligible voting population in 2012 and constituted 22.3 percent of voters.
- 4) States that a healthy democracy requires a diverse amalgamation of voices and opinions in pursuit of governing with the consent of a plurality to better represent a constituency as diverse as California's.
- 5) Resolves that, during the next revision of the history-social science curriculum framework after January 1, 2018, the Assembly requests the IQC to consider including content on the importance of preregistering to vote in local, state, and federal elections, how to preregister to vote, both online and by mail, and the requirements for preregistering to vote, as appropriate, in that framework.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires that, whenever the history-social science framework is revised as required by law, the IQC ensure that voter education information is included in the American government and civics curriculum at the high school level, including:
 - a) information on the importance registering to vote in local, state, and federal elections
 - b) how to register to vote, both online and by mail
 - c) what the requirements are to register to vote
 - d) how to request an absentee ballot

- e) how to fill out and return an absentee ballot
- f) what to expect on election day
- g) how to find a polling place
- h) where and how to access and understand the voter information pamphlet
- i) other materials to become an informed voter (EC 33540)

FISCAL EFFECT: This resolution has been keyed non-fiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the resolution. According to the author’s office, “In the most recent History-Social Science Framework, information on the logistics of voter registration was included in the curriculum, but it did not cover registration, which is available to eligible 16 and 17-year old Californians. By providing students with information on how to register and preregister to vote in high schools, this bill will help address the issue of underrepresentation of youth in both the registrant population and democratic participation.”

Participation of young voters. According to the author’s office, youth (18-29 years-old) constitute nearly a quarter of California’s voting age population, but that fewer than 16 percent of eligible 19- to 24-year olds cast their ballots in the election of 2014. The author also notes that “motor-voter” programs are becoming less effective at reaching eligible youth because the rates at which young people obtain drivers licenses or visit governmental offices has declined, and that voter preregistration is an effective way of instilling in youth a sense of civic empowerment.

Prior legislation. AB 700 (Gomez), Chapter 483, Statutes of 2013 requires that the State Board of Education ensure that voter education information is included in the American government and civics curriculum at the high school level.

AB 1817 (Gomez), Chapter 131, Statutes of 2014 establishes the last two full weeks in April and the last two full weeks in September as “high school voter education weeks,” during which people authorized by county elections officials are allowed to register students and school personnel on any high school campus.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087