March 30, 2021

Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair
Joint Legislative Budget Committee
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

Honorable Phil Ting, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee

Honorable Anthony Portantino, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee

Elections Mandates Survey

The Department of Finance respectfully submits the following Elections Mandates Survey pursuant to Chapter 25, Statutes of 2015 (SB 84).

An electronic copy of the survey can be found on the Department of Finance’s website.

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding this matter, please call Chris Hill, Principal Program Budget Analyst, at (916) 445-3274.

KEELY MARTIN BOSLER
Director

By:

RICHARD GILLIHAN
Chief Operating Officer

Attachment

cc: On following page
cc:  Honorable Jim Nielsen, Vice Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
     Honorable Vince Fong, Vice Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
     Gabriel Petek, Legislative Analyst (3)
     Joe Stephenshaw, Staff Director, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
     Kirk Feely, Fiscal Director, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
     Christopher W. Woods, Senate President pro Tempore’s Office (2)
     Christian Griffith, Chief Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
     Joseph Shinstock, Fiscal Director, Assembly Republican Caucus, Office of Policy and Budget
     Paul Dress, Caucus Co-Chief of Staff, Assembly Republican Leader’s Office
     Luigi Luciano, Legislative Director, Assembly Republican Leader’s Office
     Jason Sisney, Assembly Speaker’s Office (2)
     Mark McKenzie, Staff Director, Senate Appropriations Committee
     Jay Dickenson, Chief Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
**BACKGROUND**

As required by Chapter 25, Statutes of 2015 (SB 84), the California Department of Finance conducted an anonymous survey of county election officials pertaining to the 2020 statewide primary election and the 2020 statewide general election. The intent of the survey was to determine whether counties performed requirements set forth in the following state mandates despite the mandates’ suspended status:

1. Absentee Ballot
2. Absentee Ballot - Tabulation by Precinct
3. Primary Election
4. Permanent Absentee Voters
5. Voter Identification Procedures
6. Voter Registration Procedures

**SURVEY DETAILS**

The survey consisted of six questions regarding the individual mandates listed above, as well as an additional question pertaining to the source of funds used to perform the suspended mandates. An open comments textbox was also included at the end of the survey to allow responders to add clarifying comments or to provide additional information related to the survey.

The survey was emailed January 21, 2021, and responses were due by February 2, 2021. Reminders to complete the survey were emailed on January 25, 2021 and February 1, 2021. Of the 58 California counties surveyed, Finance received 51 responses. Eight surveys were eliminated from our analysis due to incomplete responses resulting in 43 counties being included in the Results section below.

**RESULTS**

1. **ABSENTEE BALLOT MANDATE**

Thirty-eight respondents reported incurring costs associated with increased absentee ballots and postage, and materials and supplies, while 33 respondents incurred salaries and benefits costs. In addition, a majority of respondents also incurred costs in the contracted services, fixed assets and equipment, and indirect cost categories. Results are summarized in Table 1.

![Table 1: Absentee Ballot Mandate - Costs Incurred](image)

1 Respondents that failed to answer all seven questions were considered incomplete responses.
2. **Absentee Ballot - Tabulation by Precinct Mandate**
All respondents included the precinct of each voter on the election official’s list of voters for those who received and voted by absentee ballot.

3. **Primary Election Mandate**
Forty of the respondents indicated they delivered partisan ballots to the “Decline to State” voters, 38 respondents provided partisan ballots to the “Decline to State” voters at the polls, and 38 respondents informed and trained poll workers regarding the “Decline to State” voter options. Only one respondent did not perform any of the required activities. Results are summarized in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Election Mandate-Activities Performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivered Partisan Ballots to the &quot;Decline to State&quot; Voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided Partisan Ballots to the &quot;Decline to State&quot; Voters at the Polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed and Trained Poll Workers Regarding the &quot;Decline to State&quot; Voter Options</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Permanent Absentee Voters**
Thirty-nine respondents reported processing and counting permanent absentee ballots similar to other absentee voter ballots. Further, at least two-thirds of the seven required activities noted below were performed by the respondents. Only three respondents did not perform any of the required activities. The seven required activities are as follows:

- Made an application for permanent absentee voter status available to any voter.
- Determined whether the applicant is a registered voter and the signature of the applicant and residence address on the application is the same as that on the original affidavit of registration.
- Placed the voter’s name on list of those whom an absentee ballot has been sent each time there is an election within the voter’s precinct.
- Maintained a copy of the list on file open to public inspection for election and government purposes.
- Sent a copy of the list of all voters who qualify as permanent absentee voters to each city elections official or district elections official charged with the duty of conducting an election within the county on the sixth day before an election.
- Processed and counted ballots received from voters on the permanent absentee voter list in the same manner as all other absentee voter ballots.
- Deleted the voter’s name from the list of permanent absentee voters for failing to return an executed absentee voter ballot for any statewide direct primary or general election.

Results are summarized in Table 3.
5. **Voter Identification Procedures**
All respondents performed voter identification procedures with 39 of those respondents rejecting ballots that had signatures which did not match voter’s affidavits of registration.

6. **Voter Registration Procedures**
All respondents reported processing voter registration affidavits.

7. **Funding Source Used to Carry Out Mandates**
Forty-two respondents reported funding mandate activities with their county general fund. In addition to using general fund resources, 23 respondents received funding from other local governments and 17 respondents received funding from the federal government to fund mandate activities. Results are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 3: Permanent Absentee Voters-Activities Performed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made Permanent Absentee Voter Application Available</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verified Voter, Signature and Address Match Registration</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed on List of Whom an Absentee Ballot has Been Sent</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained a Copy of Absentee Voters List for Public Inspection</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent List to Official Conducting Election</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed and Counted all Absentee Ballots in a Similar Manner</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleted Name for Failing to Return Absentee Ballot</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Funding Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Fund</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

California counties continue to perform the requirements set forth in the six state mandates, despite the mandates’ suspended status.