

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

222



FROM: Executive Office

SUBMITTAL DATE: March 24, 2003

SUBJECT: Position on AB1531 by Assembly Member Longville relating to Elections

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors take an oppose unless amended position on AB 1531 and direct the Executive Office and the Board's Sacramento representative to further the Board's position.

BACKGROUND: To address concerns that presidential nominees were selected before California held its June primary, the Legislature in 1996 set a late March primary and then in 1998 moved the primary to the first Tuesday in March. Critics argue that the March primary has resulted in low voter turnout and increased voter apathy caused by the eight months between the primary and general election. Opponents also argue that the early primary creates hardships for candidates by making them campaign through the holiday season. To address the low voter turnout without compromising the State's influence in the presidential primary, and to counter more objectionable attempts to change the statewide primary to later in the year, Assembly Member Longville has introduced AB 1531. This measure would require the statewide direct primary to be held on the first Tuesday, after the first Monday in June of each even numbered year. The bill retains the requirement that the presidential primary be held on

(Continued on next page)

Gary M. Christmas
Gary Christmas, Legislative Manager

Department Recommendation: Consent Policy
Per Executive Office: Consent Policy

FINANCIAL DATA: N/A
CURRENT YEAR COST \$
NET COUNTY COST \$

ANNUAL COST: \$
IN CURRENT YEAR Yes/
BUDGET: No/
BUDGET ADJUSTMENT Yes/
FY: No/

SOURCE OF FUNDS:

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

County Executive Office Signature

[Signature]

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the first Tuesday in March in presidential election years and specifies that the statewide primary will not be consolidated with this primary, hence requiring two primaries, one in March and one 90 days later in June during presidential election years. This new requirement would cost Riverside County and additional \$2 million in presidential election years and potentially increase the cost of conducting elections by nearly \$100 million statewide.

This bill is a reintroduction of last year's SB 1975. Governor Davis vetoed SB 1975 due to cost and voting modernization implementation concerns.



2003
LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

- BILL NUMBER:** Assembly Bill 1531
- AUTHOR:** Assembly Member John Longville
- PRESENT LAW:** Current state law requires that the statewide primary election be held on the first Tuesday in March in each even numbered year. State law also requires that in presidential election years, the statewide primary be consolidated with the presidential primary on the first Tuesday in March.
- PROPOSED LAW:** AB 1531 would require that the statewide primary be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June of each even-numbered year. The measure additionally requires that the presidential primary election be held on the first Tuesday in March, but continues to provide for the statewide primary in June, thus requiring election officials to conduct two primaries in presidential election years.
- RECOMMENDATION:** Oppose unless amended to combine the statewide primary with the presidential primary.
- DISCUSSION:** In an attempt to have greater influence in deciding presidential elections, California moved its June presidential primary to March and then consolidated the statewide primary with the presidential primary. According to critics, the March statewide primary is responsible for increased voter apathy and low voter turnout. Proponents of disconnecting the statewide primary from the presidential primary and holding it later in the year believe that this action would:
- Promote greater competition in the primaries by providing potential candidates more time to decide if they want to run for office.

- Lower the cost to run for office because the campaign cycle would be shortened.
- Allow elected officials to focus on state issues rather than lengthy reelections.
- Keep campaign volunteers involved throughout election cycle
- Increase accountability for statements made by candidates during the primaries.

County election officials, however, are concerned about the increased cost burdens created by the additional primary election during presidential election years and are very concerned about the administrative burdens this bill creates by requiring two primaries within 90 days of one another.

Many election officials believe that the solution to problems raised by Senator Johnson would be for California to return to a consolidated June primary or to consolidate the statewide and presidential primaries any time between April and June. Critics argue that the March primary has been relatively ineffective in increasing California's influence over presidential elections since most other State's also moved up their primaries.

FISCAL EFFECT:

This measure is estimated to increase the County's election cost by \$2 million in presidential election years. It is noteworthy that this bill which creates a \$50-\$100 million reimbursable state mandate at a time when the State is deferring payment of all mandates. This deferral requires Riverside County to front nearly \$10 million annually to cover the cost of state mandated programs.

**ORGANIZATION
POSITIONS:**

The California Association of Clerks and Election Officials oppose this measure.