

TESTIMONY OF TJ ROONEY AND ALAN NOVAK

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing and the opportunity to discuss these important Election Code initiatives. Our democracy is better when voter participation increases and voter access is enhanced.

We support opening the primary process to unaffiliated voters and increasing access to voting by removing restrictions on absentee voting.

We will offer comments to several of the proposed bills and constitutional amendments.

We will defer comments in favor of the taxing and paying entities on those bills that deal with costs of running elections.

An underlining assumption of our support of these Election Code measures presupposes that the voting changes will be implemented in a reasonable and responsible way maintaining voter and election integrity.

Senate Bill 300: OPEN PRIMARIES

We support this bill. We believe that unaffiliated voters should be able to vote in primary elections. It is right and fair that voters who pay taxes that are used to run primary elections should not be barred from voting in them.

The ranks of independent voters and unaffiliated voters is growing. We believe it will be good for our process to open the primary elections to these voters.

We support an open primary election process that permits unaffiliated voters and independent voters to choose the party primary election to vote.

We do not support allowing registered Republicans and Democrats to vote in the opposite party primary.

We often speak about the problems of partisan divide, uncivil discourse, and partisan gridlock. We believe opening the primary election will ease those problems. Candidates and parties will focus on a broader electorate in the primary elections than they do now, moderating the primaries and making them less ideological exercises.

Candidates and parties will start to message primary voters in a general election fashion if unaffiliated voters and independent voters are included in the primary electorate. Making primary elections more like general elections will make for better candidates, better political parties and better outcomes with broader and more inclusive messaging and outreach methods.

We believe it will sharpen the candidates and the parties.

Senate Bill 411: ABSENTEE BALLOTS

We agree with the rationale of SB 411. We agree that present restrictions on absentee ballots should be eliminated permitting voters to request and submit absentee ballots for any reason and allowing earlier voting by absentee ballot.

Senate Bill 412: POLL WORKERS

We agree with the premise of this bill—removing the restrictions which preclude federal, state, county and municipal employees from serving as poll workers.

Senate Bill 413: SEPARATE BALLOT FOR JUDICIAL RETENTION ELECTIONS

We support this bill.

Senate Bill 414: ABSENTEE BALLOTS

We support this bill. In addition to reducing the requirements when applying for absentee ballots, we agree that it is fair to mail the absentee ballots earlier and give voters more time to return absentee ballots. In essence, this is a form of early voting and we have seen where early voting has worked in other states.

Senate Bill 415: PERMANENT EARLY VOTING LIST

We agree with this bill. We support a rational process that removes inactive voters.

Senate Bill 416: VOTE CENTERS AND CURBSIDE VOTING

We support this bill. We are familiar with states that have early voting and vote centers. It has worked well. For many reasons, giving counties the option to establish vote centers where registered voters within that county can vote makes sense, assuming reasonable and reliable voter integrity protocols and technology.

Alan Novak: I am familiar with vote centers in Texas. It works well.

Curbside Voting: Support the concept. Interested in the voter integrity provisions that prohibit influencing the voter and ensuring the vote is registered as the voter desires.

Senate Bill 417: NUMBER OF VOTES TO QUALIFY AS A WRITE-IN WINNER

Agree that it should be more than 1 or 2 votes.

Senate Bill 419: CONSOLIDATE SMALLER PRECEINCTS

We support this bill.

