

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Vacancy Election in Senate District 15 is Upheld for June 22

A panel of federal judges yesterday upheld the June 22 Special Primary Election to fill the vacancy in the 15th State Senate District, thereby mandating the five county election officials to move forward with plans to conduct elections this summer to fill the vacancy.

Santa Cruz County Clerk Gail L. Pellerin continues to be outraged by the disenfranchisement of military and overseas voters who most likely will not be able to vote as a result of the Governor calling the special elections with little time to prepare and insufficient time to contact these voters.

“We have made efforts to contact our military and overseas voters and will be able to e-mail a ballot to some of them,” Pellerin said. “However, the law requires them to either FAX or mail their ballot back. If they do not have a FAX machine available, it is unlikely their voted ballot will reach us by June 22.”

Santa Cruz is one of five counties in the 15th State Senate District. The other counties: Santa Clara, Monterey, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara are now working hard to find ways to conduct a second election just two weeks after the Statewide Primary on June 8.

“The Governor had the opportunity to save \$3 million by consolidating the Senate District 15 Special Vacancy Election with the November 2nd General,” Pellerin said. “His decision to call two separate special vacancy elections this summer, one for the primary and one for the run-off, will end up costing taxpayers millions of dollars and will disenfranchise certain voters.”

Now that the Special Primary Election is on for June 22, the mission of the Santa Cruz County Clerk/Elections Department is to conduct a professional, accurate, secure, and transparent special vacancy election and to encourage every eligible registered voter to get out and vote.

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Fortunately, the laws governing special vacancy elections in California give the election officials some helpful tools to accomplish their goals while reducing costs. In Santa Cruz County, Pellerin is taking full advantage of this flexibility to save taxpayer dollars.

Some of the changes voters will see in the June 22 election include:

Voters assigned to fewer polling places

There are 57,398 registered voters in Senate District 15. Approximately 34,000 will be assigned to a polling place. The remainder have signed up to vote-by-mail or reside in a mail ballot precinct. Due to the short notice many regular poll locations are not available, so seven locations will be set up to accommodate 2 to 6 voting precincts each. Typically the department reserves polling sites a year in advance of a scheduled election, but with only 56 days notice, many of the facilities normally used as polling places are booked and unavailable for June 22.

Vote-by-Mail Voters will receive just one mailing rather than two

More than 23,000 voters will be mailed a ballot with an insert containing the Voter Information Pamphlet. In the past, election officials mailed this pamphlet separately. However, in an effort to save money, the ballot and pamphlet will be combined into one mailing.

Election officials will mail a Sample Ballot and Voter Information Pamphlet to the remaining 34,000 voters. The pamphlet informs voters where they are assigned to vote and provides them with a vote-by-mail application.

Ballots will be counted at the elections office

To further save costs, Santa Cruz County Elections will consolidate the tally of paper ballots at the Elections Department at 701 Ocean Street, Room 210, in Santa Cruz, using a high-speed ballot counting scanner.

This change will save taxpayers the cost of testing, securing, and delivering counting scanners to each polling site. However, without the scanners that will reject a ballot with more choices marked than allowed, voters need to be careful in marking their paper ballots so they will be counted as intended.

Simply drawing one line with a blue or black ball-point ink pen connecting the head and tail of the arrow pointing to the one candidate of their choice is all that is needed to cast a vote on the Senate District 15 contest.

If voters make a mistake in marking their ballot, they may obtain a second ballot. If you are at the polls, ask the elections official for another ballot. If you are voting by mail, you may call the department at 831-454-2060 or send an e-mail to 2ndballot@votescount.com

As usual, County Elections will deploy one touchscreen unit to each polling place to allow voters with disabilities to vote independently and privately in accordance with State and federal laws.

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Important dates for the Senate District 15 Special Primary Election on June 22 are:

- May 21 – Military and Overseas ballots mailed or e-mailed to voters.
- May 29 – First day to mail ballots to voters. Since this date is a Saturday over Memorial Day Weekend, ballots may be mailed Tuesday, June 1.
- June 1 – First day to obtain a ballot at the Santa Cruz County Elections Office, 701 Ocean St., Room 210 in Santa Cruz. In addition, the Watsonville City Clerk, located at 275 Main St., 4th Floor in Watsonville, will issue ballots starting June 1. Voting will be available during each offices' regular business hours. Please note that the Watsonville City Clerks' Office is closed on Fridays.
- June 7 – Last day to register to vote in the June 22 Special Primary Election.
- June 15 – Last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot.
- June 19 – Saturday voting hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Santa Cruz County Elections Office and Watsonville City Clerk's Office.
- June 22 – Election Day. Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. Vote-by-mail ballots must be received by the election official in the county of residence by 8 p.m. – postmark is not acceptable.

For more information, please call the Santa Cruz County Clerk/Elections Department at 831-454-2060 or visit us online at www.votescount.com

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