



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2005
WWW.USDOJ.GOV

CRT
(202) 514-2007
TDD (202) 514-1888

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REACHES AGREEMENT WITH CALIFORNIA ON FEDERALLY REQUIRED STATEWIDE VOTER REGISTRATION LISTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Justice Department today announced an agreement with the State of California to ensure the state's compliance with the voter registration list requirements of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). Under the agreement, the state will implement both a temporary plan and a long term permanent solution to meet its obligations under HAVA.

"This agreement is a model for other states as they continue to develop and operate their own statewide voter registration lists," said Bradley J. Schlozman, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "HAVA's voter registration list requirements are among its most important, and we applaud the new leadership in the California Secretary of State's office for working cooperatively with us to reach this positive and timely result."

HAVA requires reforms in elections for federal office, including a requirement that states set up and maintain a computerized statewide voter registration list containing the name and registration information of every legally-registered voter in the state. The law also requires that a unique identification number be assigned to each voter on the registration list. This statewide list must be the official list of all registered voters for federal elections and must be connected with other state agency databases to assist state and local election officials in keeping an accurate and up-to-date list. For most states, including California, the voter registration list requirement takes effect on January 1, 2006.

The memorandum of agreement is a direct result of discussions between the Justice Department and California Secretary of State Bruce McPherson, the state's new chief election official, who sought the Department's assistance in reviewing California's revised plans for meeting HAVA's requirements. A lack of adequate planning and action by the prior leadership of the Office of the Secretary had put the

state in imminent danger of not having a HAVA-compliant statewide voter registration system in place by the January 1, 2006 deadline.

This agreement calls for California to satisfy HAVA's voter registration list requirement in two steps. The state will first implement a temporary solution by updating the state's existing "CalVoter" registration system by January 1, 2006. Under the temporary plan:

- All county voter registration lists will be combined into CalVoter to become the official statewide voter registration list in elections for federal office as of January 1, 2006;
- Counties will be required to keep HAVA information in their existing election management systems, which they will add to CalVoter on a daily basis, including the registrant's unique identification number, a notation whether that unique number has been checked against state or federal records, and a notation whether the registrant is covered by HAVA's identification requirements for persons registering for the first time by mail;
- State and county election officials will have computer systems that allow immediate access to California Department of Motor Vehicle records to check registrants' identification information as well as, where necessary, access through DMV to federal Social Security Administration records; and
- State and local election officials will have computer connections that allow access to state death and felony records in order to remove from the list those persons who have died or who are convicted felons ineligible to vote.

To carry out the temporary plan, the state will adopt regulations effective January 1, 2006. The temporary plan will remain in effect until the state implements a permanent voter registration list solution, "VoteCal," which is currently going through the state approval process. The agreement also gives the Justice Department access to state personnel and records to monitor the state's compliance progress.

###

05-585