

# TOM UMBERG

SENATOR, 34<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

**SB 884 (Umberg-Cervantes) Protect our Polls Act**



Updated (April 20, 2026)

## SUMMARY

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Senate Bill 884 safeguards the integrity of California elections by creating a 200 foot buffer zone around polling places and ballot processing sites that prohibits federal immigration enforcement and electioneering in order to protect voters from intimidation and disruption. SB 884 also increases ballot drop-off locations in all counties, opens ballot drop-off locations earlier, extends the deadline for counting vote-by-mail ballots, and allows county elections officials to keep polls open longer if voting is interfered with.

## BACKGROUND/EXISTING LAW

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Currently, existing law allows counties to conduct elections either through traditional polling places or as all vote-by-mail elections, which require providing a minimum number of vote centers based on the number of registered voters. Counties must also offer a required number of ballot drop-off locations, with higher minimums for all vote-by-mail elections, and these locations must open at least 28 days before Election Day.

Additionally, vote-by-mail ballots are considered valid if they are postmarked by Election Day and received within seven days afterward. The law also prohibits campaigning or electioneering within 100 feet of any polling place, elections office, vote center, or ballot drop-off location.

Federal law generally bars the President from deploying military troops at polling places, and many states prohibit firearms at or near voting locations.

## NEED FOR THE BILL

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However, reports indicate that President Trump may seek to invoke the Insurrection Act, a 19th-century law that allows the President to deploy the military in response to civil unrest, raising concerns about its potential use during elections. Steve Bannon, former White House chief strategist in the first Trump administration, has publicly supported efforts to nationalize elections and called for deploying ICE agents and military troops to polling places, stating on his podcast, “We’re going to have ICE surround the polls come November... we’re not going to sit here and allow you to steal the country again.

The federal administration has been encroaching on the state’s rights to hold free and fair elections. There are pushes by President Trump’s allies to deploy ICE and military troops to polling sites. Measures such as the SAVE Act passed by the House, seek to disenfranchise voters and suppress turnout among minority communities.

The Federal Administration has consistently been advocating for nationalizing elections. In the media the President and his cabinet have publicly stated we need the “right people voting for the right candidates” and that republicans should “take over” elections.

Trump has proven these are not idle threats. During the November 2025 general election, the Trump administration’s Justice Department deployed personnel to monitor polling sites in five counties: Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside on Election Day. Fresno, Kern and Riverside counties are majority Latino. As the administration continues to escalate interference with California’s elections, the state must act now to preserve the integrity of its elections.

In December 2025, the United States Postal Service changed its postmark policy so that mail is no longer stamped when it is first dropped off but instead when it reaches a regional processing center, a move widely speculated to disproportionately disenfranchise Democratic voters by delaying postmarks on ballots and other time-sensitive mail due to recent USPS consolidations

In March, President Donald Trump issued an executive order instructing the attorney general to take action to prevent states from counting absentee/mail-in ballots that arrive after Election Day. The order has since been challenged in court.

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### SOLUTION

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Senate Bill 884 protects the integrity of our elections through several commonsense reforms. It expands the existing 100-foot electioneering buffer zone to 200 feet around polling places, county elections offices, ballot drop-off locations, and locations where ballots are counted, canvassed, audited, certified, or recounted.

It also prohibits federal, state, and local law enforcement officers from making arrests within 200 feet of a polling place on Election Day while polls are open, except for specified serious crimes and offenses that disrupt polling place operations. In the interest of protecting voters and ensuring participation in our democracy, law enforcement should not be present near voting locations unless necessary to address an imminent threat of bodily harm. SB 884 would be temporary and apply only to elections from 2026 through 2029.

Given the expected federal interference with California's elections, SB 884 would also increase options to avoid physical polls by increasing the number of ballot drop-off locations in all counties, requiring those locations to open at least 30 days before Election Day, and ensuring greater access to vote-by-mail ballot return. This measure would further allow county elections officials to extend poll closing times on Election Day, without court approval, if voting was disrupted. SB 884 also makes changes to existing vote-by-mail law by allowing ballots postmarked on or before Election

Day to be counted if they arrive up to ten days after Election Day

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Brooke McNeill

Phone: (916) 651-4034

Email: [Brooke.McNeill@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Brooke.McNeill@sen.ca.gov)