



ASSEMBLY MEMBER

Kevin Mullin

DISTRICT 22



AB 554: Student Poll Workers – Lawful Permanent Residents

PURPOSE

AB 554 amends the California Elections Code to allow high school students who are lawful permanent residents to serve as poll workers. The purpose is to address the shortage of bilingual poll workers in California and to educate high school students who are lawful permanent residents about the American democratic system.

EXISTING LAW

In 2013 the legislature passed AB 817 (Bonta), which was signed into law by Governor Brown, to allow lawful permanent residents to serve as poll workers in California. The bill did not, however, amend the section of law that relates to high school students who are allowed to serve as poll workers.

BACKGROUND & OPPORTUNITY

California is an increasingly diverse state: 43 percent of households speak a language other than English at home and there are more than 220 spoken languages overall. Many citizens have limited English speaking abilities, which could impact their ability to cast a ballot. In fact, over 2.6 million eligible voters in California are not yet fully proficient in English, including 47 percent of eligible voters who are naturalized. To assist these voters, elections officials recruit bilingual individuals to serve as poll workers. In recent years, however, elections officials have had difficulty recruiting a sufficient number of bilingual poll workers to fully address voters' language needs. AB 554 addresses this shortage by further expanding the pool of potential bilingual poll workers to include high school students who are lawful permanent residents.

Additionally, the bill provides an educational opportunity for high school-aged lawful permanent residents who want to learn about United States elections, a privilege that already exists for lawful permanent residents who are 18 or over. High school students across the state are learning about government in civics classes, and this bill would give them the opportunity to experience American democracy firsthand.

SUMMARY

AB 554 addresses the shortage of bilingual poll workers by expanding the pool of eligible poll workers to include high school students age 16 and above who are lawful permanent residents.

SUPPORT

Common Cause
California Association of Clerks and Elections Officials
National Association of Latino Elected Officials
Thai Community Development Center
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
Asian Americans Advancing Justice
Anti-Defamation League
Southwest Center for Asian Pacific American Law
Southeast Asian Resource Action Center
API Equality – LA

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