

**DEPARTMENT:** Elections Department

**BY:** Marjorie J. Wass  
**PHONE:** 209-966-2007

**RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:**

Request the Chairman to sign a letter to Senator Johnson opposing SB 430, which would designate September for the statewide primary and a separate March Presidential primary during the Presidential election cycle.

**BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:**

The Board of Supervisors has in the past opposed legislation that would have a negative impact on the County.

**ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:**

Financial Impact? ( ) Yes ( ) No	Current FY Cost: \$	Annual Recurring Cost: \$
Budgeted In Current FY? ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Partially Funded		
Amount in Budget: \$		List Attachments, number pages consecutively
Additional Funding Needed: \$		Memo to Board
Source:		Draft letter
Internal Transfer		
Unanticipated Revenue	_____ 4/5's vote	
Transfer Between Funds	_____ 4/5's vote	
Contingency	_____ 4/5's vote	
( ) General ( ) Other		

**CLERK'S USE ONLY:**

Res. No.: 03-155 Ord. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Vote - Ayes: 5 Noes: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Absent: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approved  
 ( ) Minute Order Attached ( ) No Action Necessary

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Requested Action Recommended  
 No Opinion  
 Comments:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board  
 County of Mariposa, State of California  
 By: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Deputy

CAO: RJH

# Mariposa County Board of Supervisors



RICHARD H. INMAN  
County Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS  
Clerk of the Board

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District 3 ..... JANET BIBBY  
District 4 ..... GARRY R. PARKER  
District 5 ..... BOB PICKARD

June 3, 2003

Senator Ross Johnson  
State Capital, Room 3063  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Johnson:

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors has reviewed **SB 430**, your proposal to bifurcate the presidential and direct primary elections and to move the direct primary election to September of even-numbered years. The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors is in **Opposition** to **SB 430**.

The cost of conducting an additional primary election is projected to be \$60 million dollars statewide. This financial obligation would be imposed on taxpayers at a time when State and local governments are already facing serious budget shortfalls.

While it is understood that some other states hold separate presidential and direct primary elections, those states do not have to administer California's complex and labor intensive election laws, including the preparation and distribution of Sample Ballots and Voter Information Pamphlets, consolidation of local elections, numerous state and local ballot measures, a 15 day close of registration, and permanent absentee voting. Further, primary elections, whether presidential or direct, require separate ballots to be prepared for each political party that has qualified to participate.

California's election officials have openly expressed concern regarding the increasing complexity of administering elections, and their ability to meet those demands. A September primary election would conflict with numerous existing statutory deadlines for the November general election. Mandating two separate primary elections, the second of which overlaps the preparation for the November general election, significantly increases the complexity of the election administration and jeopardizes the conduct of both the September primary and the November general election.

Thank you for considering our concerns regarding the implications of SB 430.

Sincerely,

Bob Pickard  
Chairman  
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

cc: Assemblyman Poochigian  
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)  
California Association of Clerks & Election Officials (CACEO)  
Wagerman & Associates





**Marjorie J. Wass**  
**Treasurer – Tax Collector and**  
**County Clerk**

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Treasurer (209) 966-2830 - Tax Collector (209) 966-2621 - County Clerk / Registrar of Voters (209) 966-2007 - Fax (209) 966-6496

## MEMO

Date: May 2, 2003

To: Board of Supervisors  
CAO  
County Counsel

From: Marjorie J. Wass

Re: Opposition to SB 430

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Current state law requires that the statewide primary election be held on the first Tuesday in March in each even-numbered year. State law also requires that in Presidential election years, the statewide primary be consolidated with the Presidential primary on the first Tuesday in March.

SB 430 would require that the statewide primary be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in September of each even-numbered year. The measure additionally requires that the Presidential primary election be held on the first Tuesday in March but continues to provide for the statewide primary in September, thus requiring election officials to conduct two primaries in Presidential election years.

In an attempt to have greater influence in deciding Presidential elections, California moved its June primary to March. According to critics, the March primary is responsible for increased voter apathy and low voter turnout. Proponents of SB 430 argue that dozens of other states, including New York, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts and Michigan, hold statewide primaries in August or September and that California should be able to also. By moving the statewide primary to September, proponents state that this measure would:

- Promote greater competition in the primaries by providing potential candidates more time to decide if they want to run for office.
- Lower the cost to run for office because the campaign cycle could be shortened.
- Allow elected officials to focus on state issues rather than lengthy reelections.
- Keep campaign volunteers involved throughout election cycle.

- Increase accountability for statements made by candidates during the primaries.

County election officials, however, are concerned about the increased cost burdens created by the additional primary election during Presidential election years and are very concerned about the administrative burdens this bill creates by shortening the time between elections from approximately 240 days to 60 days. Election officials express concern over the ability to conduct, canvass and certify election results and still allow time for recounts or legal challenges while they prepare for the general election in just 60 days. Election officials have also expressed concern with out-of-county and overseas voters, many of them military members, having adequate time to receive absentee ballots and return them in time to accommodate the shortened election cycle.

It should be noted that while ballot-marking issues received the lion's share of attention in the post-November 2000 Presidential Florida debacle, the problems created by the short time available for canvassing and certifying results was responsible for much of the litigation that surrounded those election results.

Many election officials believe that the solution to the problems raised by Senator Johnson would be for California to return to a consolidated June primary or to a consolidate election held any time between April and June. Critics of the March primary argue that it has been relatively ineffective in increasing California's influence over Presidential elections since most other states also moved up their primaries. To make a September primary work, election officials believe significant reforms to the election process would have to occur, including eliminating the requirement to provide sample ballots. These necessary reforms may, in fact, work against the goal of SB 430, which is to increase voter turnout.

In virtually every case where elections are held that are supplementary to consolidated elections, i.e. special elections, city "stand alone" elections, etc., voter turnout suffers. Consistently voters complain about such elections not being incorporated (consolidated) with other scheduled elections. They cite costs and inconvenience regularly in these criticisms.

This measure is estimated to increase the County's election cost by approximately \$68,000 in Presidential election years. It is noteworthy that this bill creates a \$50 million reimbursable state mandate at a time when the State is deferring payment of all mandates. This deferral requires Mariposa County to front over \$15,000 in outstanding and unpaid claims to cover the costs of State mandates.

The County is estimating our claim to be \$193,100 for 2003/2004 and then would drive our total unpaid claim to \$208,100 by the end of FY 2003/2004.