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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CLERKS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

GAIL L. PELLERIN, PRESIDENT

Santa Cruz County Clerk
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* non-voting member

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DEBORAH SEILER
San Diego County

August 11, 2010

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Authorizing All Mail In Ballot for the January 4, 2011 Senate District 1 Special Election

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger,

As President of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials and on behalf of the 12 counties involved in the Senate District 1 Special Vacancy Election scheduled for January 4, 2011, I am writing to request your support of a proposal to allow the counties to conduct that election by all mail in ballot.

In the last Special Vacancy Election in the 15th State Senate District on June 22, more than 77% of those who voted did so by mail and just 22.5% of the voters voted at the polls. Historically, turnout at the polls for special vacancy elections ranges from 2.5 to 17.5% of the total registered voters.

The Association is particularly concerned by the timing of this special election, set for the first Tuesday of the new year, after the winter holiday. Reasons for allowing counties to conduct this election by all mail in ballot include:

- Lower costs – the counties have estimated that an all-mail election will save taxpayers \$376,000, as no polling places would be needed, thus saving the costs of recruiting and paying pollworkers and outfitting polls with supplies and voting equipment. Since there is no guarantee that counties will be reimbursed for the cost of these expensive special elections, in these difficult budget times it makes sense to allow for cost saving measures.
- Polling place turnout at special vacancy elections is historically low, mail ballot elections have been proven to increase voter turnout;
- Weather during the winter months in this district is unpredictable, and access to polling places may be impaired by weather conditions, further impacting turnout; and
- Recruiting and training a sufficient number of poll workers for a January 4, 2011 election following the winter holidays will be difficult if not impossible.

I hope you will join the 12 counties and our California Association of Clerks and Election Officials in supporting an all mail in ballot for the January 4, 2011, Special Vacancy Election in Senate District 1. If I can provide you with any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Gail L. Pellerin, President
California Association of
Clerks and Election Officials