

California voters get their chance to require voter ID

California voters will decide in November whether to require government-issued identification at the polls, putting one of the nation's biggest election integrity battles directly in the hands of voters.

Proposition 39, which will appear on the Nov. 3 ballot, would amend the California Constitution to require citizens voting in person to show a government-issued ID before casting a ballot.

The measure would also establish new identification requirements for Californians voting by mail. Those voters would be required to provide either the last four digits of their Social Security number or their driver's license number on the outside of their ballot envelope and specify which form of identification they used.

The number would have to match the type selected by the voter. According to the state's voter information guide, a voter who selects a driver's license but instead provides the last four digits of a Social Security number could have the ballot rejected.

Proposition 39 would also require election officials to publish annual reports showing the percentage of voters in each county whose U.S. citizenship has been verified.

Supporters argue the changes would bring California in line with election safeguards already used across much of the country while strengthening public confidence in the voting process.

"It's a practical way to update how we run elections in California," state Sen. Suzette Martinez Valladares (R-Lancaster) told The Center Square. "Requiring a standard government-issued ID to vote is not moving backward. It's a step toward a more modern and open system."

Valladares said the proposal also provides a free state identification card to eligible voters who do not already have one.

"Prop. 39 makes sure no one is left out," she said.

State Sen. Tony Strickland (R-Huntington Beach), an early supporter of the initiative, has previously pointed to voter ID requirements elsewhere in the country as evidence that such rules do not necessarily suppress turnout.

“I just remind everybody that 36 other states have this as part of their laws,” Strickland said. “Every state that has had this actually had higher voter participation, not lower.”

State Sen. Steven Choi (R-Irvine), vice chairman of the Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee, said passage could help restore confidence among Californians who question the security of elections.

“I believe the biggest impact you will see if Proposition 39 is successful will be building confidence in elections, across the board,” Choi said. “With that confidence, we will likely see increased voter participation.”

The measure reached the ballot after supporters collected roughly 1.02 million voter signatures, comfortably clearing the 874,641 required to qualify.

California Democrats are mounting an aggressive campaign against it.

Rusty Hicks, chairman of the California Democrat Party, called Proposition 39 a “Trump-backed attack” and argued that it would create additional barriers for voters while increasing costs and slowing election results.

“It would make voting harder, put voters’ personal information at risk, force taxpayers to spend hundreds of millions of dollars and delay election results,” Hicks said, promising Democrats would work to defeat the proposal.