



# LIFE CYCLE OF A BALLOT

## Steps of the Vote-By-Mail Process:

1

### Receive A Ballot

All active registered voters are sent a vote-by-mail ballot starting no later than 29 days before Election Day. Voters can be notified when their ballot is sent by signing up for *Where's My Ballot?* [WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov](http://WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov)

2

### Mark The Ballot

A voter marks their ballot, places it into the return envelope, and signs the return envelope. This signature will be verified by the county elections official after the return envelope is received.

3

### Return The Ballot

Ballot return envelopes have pre-paid postage. They can be placed in the mail, placed in an official ballot drop box, or brought to any polling place in the state on or before Election Day.

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### Ballot Must Be Postmarked By Election Day

In order to be counted, all mailed ballots must be postmarked by Election Day and received by the county elections official no later than 7 days after Election Day.

5

### County Elections Official Collects Ballots

Ballots are regularly collected from the post office and drop boxes by the county elections official. A strict chain of custody is required.

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### Voters Are Notified

Voters signed up for *Where's My Ballot?* will receive a notification that their ballot has been received.

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### Ballot Return Envelope Signature Verification

For security purposes, all vote-by-mail ballots undergo verification checks, which includes capturing an image of the voter's signature on the ballot return envelope for authentication.

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### Signature Challenges

Signatures on ballot return envelopes are checked against voter registration records. If the signature is missing or does not compare to the voter's registration record, the voter will be contacted to resolve the issue.

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### Ballots Are Counted

Starting at 8 pm on election night, reporting begins on vote-by-mail ballots received prior to Election Day and on ballots voted at polling locations. Ballots continue to be counted until certification.

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### Check Ballot Status

Voters can check on the status of their ballot through *My Voter Status*. [VoterStatus.sos.ca.gov](http://VoterStatus.sos.ca.gov)



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