

# TOM UMBERG

SENATOR, 34<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

**SB 249: Increasing Participation in Education Board Elections**

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## SUMMARY

SB 249 would require any election for the elected members of a county board of education to be consolidated with the statewide general election.

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## BACKGROUND/EXISTING LAW

Currently, counties throughout California allow county officials to be elected in low voter turnout primary elections rather than having voters in higher turnout general elections to make those final determination.

In 2017, Assemblymembers Todd Gloria and Shirley Weber authored and passed AB 901 which allowed the County of San Diego to switch to a top-two runoff system. Currently, members of the State Legislature and the California Congressional Delegation are elected using the top-two system.

However, school boards (including local school districts and county boards of education) have the option of holding their single plurality elections in either the primary or in the general election. Some school boards choose to hold their single plurality election in the primary therefore eliminating the possibility of a general election school board election.

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## NEED FOR THE BILL

California has a variety of cities and counties prescribing their requirements for elected office in a manner that is not uniform and undemocratic in how officials are elected. Primary elections often have lower turnout than

general elections because a lot of people aren't aware that the election is decided in the primary. This means a small, less informed group of voters may decide important education leadership positions. Additionally, voters that participate in primary elections differ from those that vote in the general election. The need for a runoff or for the plurality election to occur during the statewide general election is essential to more accurately represent voter's preferences and to create a more democratic process.

County districts can be as large as two million people. They can also be exempt from term limits, and are also non-partisan. This results in a situation where a small number of voters in the primary who have limited information can make final decisions on very important offices.

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## SOLUTION

This bill will require any election for the elected members of a county board of education to be consolidated with the statewide general election. This bill will also require the term of office of all incumbent elected members of a county board of education to be extended accordingly, and would require the county committee on school district organization to determine the manner in which the county board of education elected shall effect a staggering of terms, if necessary.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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