



**DEBRA BOWEN** | SECRETARY OF STATE  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA | ELECTIONS

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January 26, 2011

County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum # 11006

TO: All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters

FROM:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robbie Anderson", written over a horizontal line.

Robbie Anderson  
Elections Counsel

RE: Candidate Filing: Certified List of Write-in Candidates Alternative Names

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Under the law, elections officials are required to count a vote for a qualified write-in candidate if the written name can be reasonably interpreted to resemble the name of a qualified write-in candidate.

Specifically, Elections Code section 15342 provides, in part:

Any name written upon a ballot for a qualified write-in candidate, including a reasonable facsimile of the spelling of a name, shall be counted for the office, if it is written in the blank space provided...

Furthermore, Section 20103 of the California Code of Regulations provides:

The misspelled or incomplete name of a qualified write-in candidate written in on a ballot shall be counted for the candidate when the office for which the candidate has qualified is also indicated on the voter's ballot, if:

- (a) the name as written bears a reasonable resemblance to the qualified candidate's name; and
- (b) no other write-in candidate qualified for the indicated office has a name that is so similar to the name as written in as to leave a reasonable doubt as to the voter's intention.

For some time, it has been the voluntary practice of the Secretary of State's office to accept lists of alternate names provided by qualified write-in candidates and to include those alternate names on the certified lists of qualified write-in candidates that are provided to county elections officials and the public.

Unfortunately, rather than provide some examples on how to interpret the law, the lists may have been interpreted by some as being a limitation on the write-in name variations that are acceptable under the law.

CCROV # 11006  
January 26, 2011  
Page 2

Therefore, to eliminate the potential for confusion, the Secretary of State will cease the voluntary practice of accepting lists of alternate names provided by qualified write-in candidates and including those names on the certified list of qualified write-in candidates that are provided to county election officials and the public.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (916) 653-1690 or [robbie.anderson@sos.ca.gov](mailto:robbie.anderson@sos.ca.gov).