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September 23, 2026

County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum # 26252

TO: All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters

FROM: /s/ Rachelle Delucchi
Elections Counsel

RE: General Election: Signature Comparison; Noncomparable Signatures and Unsigned Envelopes; Cure Statements

This memorandum will serve as a reminder regarding the following:

- signature comparison,
- noncomparable signatures and unsigned ballot identification envelopes,
- signature cure statements and posting of the combined statement,
- statutory information on signature comparison, and
- procedures that apply to the comparison of signatures on ballot identification envelopes, also apply to provisional ballot identification envelopes.

Signature Comparison

Upon receiving a vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot, the elections official shall compare the signature on the identification envelope with either of the following to determine if the signatures compare:

- The signature appearing on the voter's affidavit of registration or any previous affidavit of registration of the voter.

- The signature appearing on a form issued by an elections official that contains the voter's signature and that is part of the voter's registration record.

(Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (a)(1)(A), (B).)

If upon conducting the comparison of signatures the elections official determines that the signatures compare, the elections official shall deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office. (Elec. Code,

§ 3019, subd. (b).) A ballot shall not be removed from its identification envelope until the time for processing ballots. A ballot shall not be rejected for cause after the identification envelope has been opened. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (h).)

Noncomparable Signatures

On or before the next business day after a determination that a voter's signature does not compare, but not later than **November 17, 2026 (E+14)**, the elections official shall send notice to the voter of the opportunity to verify the voter's signature. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (d)(1)(A), (j)(1).)

The notice shall be sent by first-class mail and shall include a postage-paid return envelope and must indicate the voter has the opportunity to verify their signature until no later than **5 p.m. on November 25, 2026 (E+22)**. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (a), (d)(1)(A), (j)(1).)

County elections officials shall not reject a VBM ballot or a provisional ballot for the reason of noncomparable signatures if one of the following occurs:

- the voter completes and submits a Signature Verification Statement (or the combined statement) to a polling location within the county or a ballot drop-off box, before the close of the polls on Election Day, **or**

- the voter delivers, in person, by mail, by fax, by email, or by other means, a Signature Verification Statement (or the combined statement) signed by the voter and the county elections official receives it no later than **5 p.m. on November 25, 2026 (E+22)**,

  and

- the voter's signature on the Signature Verification Statement (or the combined statement) compares with the signature(s) in the voter's registration record.

(Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (d)(4)(A), (B)(i).)

If the elections official determines that the <u>signatures compare</u>, the elections official shall deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office. Additionally, the official shall use the signature on the Signature Verification Statement (or the combined statement), even if returned untimely, to update the voter's signature for future elections, including updating the signature database. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (d)(4)(B)(i), (6).)

If a determination is made that the <u>signatures do not compare</u>, the ballot identification envelope shall not be opened, the ballot shall not be counted, and the elections official

shall write the cause of the rejection on the face of the identification envelope. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (d)(4)(B)(ii).)

Unsigned Ballot Identification Envelopes

On or before the next business day after discovering that a voter has failed to sign their identification envelope, but not later than **November 17, 2026 (E+14)**, the elections official shall send notice to the voter of the opportunity to provide their signature. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (e)(1)(B)(i), (j)(1).)

The notice shall be sent by first-class mail and shall include a postage-paid return envelope and must indicate the voter has the opportunity to provide their signature no later than **5 p.m. on November 25, 2026 (E+22)**. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (e)(1)(B).)

County elections officials shall not reject a VBM ballot or a provisional ballot for the reason of an unsigned ballot identification envelope if one of the following occurs:

- the voter signs the ballot identification envelope at the office of the elections official during regular business hours, no later than **5 p.m. on November 25, 2026 (E+22)**,

- the voter completes and submits an Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement (or the combined statement) to a polling location within the county or a ballot drop-off box before the close of the polls on Election Day, **or**

- the voter completes and submits an Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement (or the combined statement) to the county elections official in person, by mail, by fax, by email, or by other means made available by the elections official, no later than **5 p.m. on November 25, 2026 (E+22)**.

  and

- the voter's signature on the Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement (or the combined statement) compares with the signature(s) in the voter's registration record.

(Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (e)(1)(A)(i), (ii), (iii), (C)(i).)

If the elections official determines that the <u>signatures compare</u>, the elections official shall attach the unsigned identification envelope statement to the identification envelope and deposit the ballot, still in the identification envelope, in a ballot container in the elections official's office. Additionally, the official shall use the signature on the Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement (or the combined statement), even if returned untimely, to update the voter's signature for future elections, including updating the signature database. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (e)(1)(C)(i), (E).)

If a determination is made that the signatures do not compare, the ballot identification envelope shall not be opened, and the elections official shall provide notice to the voter pursuant to subdivisions (c) and (d) of Section 3019. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (e)(1)(C)(ii).)

Signature Cure Statements and Posting on Websites

The Combined Signature Verification and Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement specific to the November 3, 2026, General Election is provided on the Secretary of State's (SOS) website at https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/statewide-elections/2026-general/november-3-2026-general-combo-statement.pdf. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (f).)

Courtesy samples of the Signature Verification Statement, the Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement, and the combined statement specific to the November 3, 2026, General Election are attached to this CCROV. Translations of these statements were sent to county elections officials last month. If you would like a Word version of any of the attached forms, please email translations@sos.ca.gov.

County elections officials shall include the combined statement developed by the SOS, or a combined statement developed by their office that meets the statutory requirements, along with the instructions for the completion of the statement, on their internet website. County elections officials shall also provide their mailing address, email address, and facsimile transmission number on the internet webpage containing the statement and instructions. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (f).)

On August 7, 2026, CCROV # 26207 was sent and requested each county's webpage containing the required information for signature cures. The SOS will create a webpage listing those links, which will be included in the ballot tracking messages, when applicable.

Signature Comparison - Statutory Information

All of the following apply with respect to signature comparison, including the comparison of a voter's signature on a Signature Verification Statement, an Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement, or a combined statement, with the signature that is part of the voter's registration record:

- A presumption exists that the signature on the identification envelope, signature verification statement, unsigned identification envelope statement, or provisional ballot envelope is the voter's signature and that the vote will be counted.
- An exact match is not required for an elections official to determine that a voter's signature is valid. The fact that signatures share similar characteristics is sufficient to determine that a signature is valid.

- The elections official shall consider explanations for discrepancies between signatures that are specified in regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State. Explanations include a variation in signature style over time and the haste with which a signature is written.
- When comparing signatures, an elections official shall not review or consider any of the following:
    - A voter's party preference, race, or ethnicity.
    - A voter's identifying information including gender, name, or address, except to confirm the identity of the voter.
    - The amount of time spent reviewing a signature.
- The elections official may consider characteristics of the written signature that are specified in regulations promulgated by the SOS. Characteristics include the slant of the signature, letter formation, and whether the signature is printed or written in cursive.
- The elections official may use facsimiles of voters' signatures, provided that the method of preparing and displaying the facsimiles complies with the law.
- In comparing signatures, an elections official may use signature verification technology. If signature verification technology determines that the signatures do not compare, the signature is subject to this additional procedure:
    - The signature shall be rejected only if two additional elections officials each find beyond a reasonable doubt that the signature differs in multiple, significant, and obvious respects from all signatures in the voter's registration record.
- The variation of a signature caused by the substitution of initials for the first or middle name, or both, is not grounds for the elections official to determine that the signatures do not compare.
- A signature made using a mark such as an "X", or made by a signature stamp, shall be presumed valid and shall be accepted if the signature meets the requirements of Section 354.5.

(Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (a)(2).)

In comparing signatures pursuant to this section, including when using signature verification software or other technology, an elections official shall adhere to all applicable regulations promulgated by the SOS. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (k).)

If an elections official establishes procedures that they use when comparing signatures, the elections official shall post the procedures used on their internet website or provide them upon request. Any such procedures shall adhere to regulations promulgated by the SOS. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (m).)

Additional Information on Cure Statements and Notices

If an elections official has a telephone number or email address on file for the voter, the elections official shall notify the voter by telephone, text message, or email of the

opportunity to verify or provide their signature. If an elections official calls the voter and the voter does not answer, the elections official shall attempt to leave a voicemail message. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (d)(1)(B), (e)(1)(B)(ii).)

The elections official may send additional written notices to the voter and may also notify the voter in person or by other means of the opportunity to verify or provide their signature. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (d)(1)(C), (e)(1)(B)(iii).)

The elections official may use any information in a county's election management system, or otherwise in the elections official's possession, for the purpose of notifying the voter of the opportunity to verify or provide their signature. Additionally, an elections official is authorized to use contact information provided on a voter's affidavit of registration to contact a voter for purposes consistent Section 3019. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (d)(1)(D), (e)(1)(B)(iv), (l).)

The notice must also include a statement that the signature provided by the voter may be added to the voter's registration record to be used for signature comparison purposes in future elections. (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 2, §§ 20990(d), (e), 20992(d), (e).)

The notices and the instructions to voters related to noncomparable signatures and unsigned ballot identification envelopes must be translated in all languages required in the county by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. § 10503). (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (d)(3), (e)(3).)

County elections officials shall accept the combined statement from a voter and may mail the combined statement to a voter in lieu of the Signature Verification Statement or Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (f).) The elections official shall accept a form developed by the SOS or the elections official but shall not accept a form created by any individual, organization, or other entity. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (n).)

The cure statements shall contain, where the voter signs, a statement that the county elections official is required to compare the voter's signature appearing on the statement with the signatures appearing in the voter's registration record, which may include the signature appearing on the voter's driver's license or state identification card. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subds. (d)(8), (e)(5).)

A local elections official offering other electronic means for submission of a cure statement shall establish appropriate privacy and security protocols that ensure that the information transmitted is received directly and securely by the elections official and is only used for the stated purposes of verifying the signature on the voter's ballot. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (g).)

An elections official that places a VBM ballot drop box, as defined in Section 3025, at their office location to receive ballots, shall also use that drop box after the election in

order to receive a cure statement provided that the drop box used after the election contains a clear and conspicuous label that it is to be used for this limited purpose and not for acceptance of late ballots. This provision only applies to a drop box located at the office of the elections official, and not any other drop box throughout the county. (Elec. Code, § 3019, subd. (o).)

Information related to voters who did not sign their ballot identification envelope or whose signature on their ballot identification envelope did not compare to the voter's signature(s) in the voter's registration record shall be treated as confidential voter registration information. This information shall be provided with respect to any voter, subject to the provisions of Sections 2166, 2166.5, 2166.7, 2166.8, 2166.9, and 2188, to any candidate for federal, state, or local office, to any committee for or against any initiative or referendum measure for which legal publication is made, and to any person for election, scholarly, journalistic, or political purposes, or for governmental purposes, as determined by the SOS, but otherwise shall not be disclosed to any person. Any disclosure of this information shall be accompanied by a notice to the recipient regarding Sections 18109 and 18540. This voter information shall be updated daily, include the name of the voter, and be provided in a searchable electronic format. The daily update shall also include, as applicable, information regarding whether a form has been received from the voter to verify their signature (for non-comparable), whether a form has been received or the voter has otherwise provided a signature (for a missing signature), and whether the signature provided did or did not compare. (Elec. Code, § 2194, subd. (f)(1), (2); Gov. Code, § 7924.000.)

Additionally, the procedures that apply to the comparison of signatures on VBM ballot identification envelopes apply to provisional ballot identification envelopes. (See, Elec. Code, § 14310, subd. (c)(1); Cal. Code Regs. tit. 2, § 20992; discussion in Chapter 5 of the California NVRA Manual.) Accordingly, the notices and cure periods related to noncomparable signatures on VBM ballot identification envelopes and unsigned VBM ballot identification envelopes also apply to noncomparable signatures on provisional ballot identification envelopes and unsigned provisional ballot identification envelopes.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Rachelle Delucchi at rdelucch@sos.ca.gov or Robbie Anderson at aanderso@sos.ca.gov. Thank you.

Attachments specific to the November 3, 2026, General Election:

- Signature Verification Statement
- Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement
- Combined Signature Verification Statement and Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement

SIGNATURE VERIFICATION STATEMENT & INSTRUCTIONS

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.
FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. We have determined that the signature you provided on your vote-by-mail or provisional ballot identification envelope does not compare with the signature(s) on file in your voter record.

2. To ensure that your ballot for the **November 3, 2026, General Election** will be counted, this completed Signature Verification Statement must be received by our office as soon as possible, but **no later than 5 p.m. on November 25, 2026**. You must sign your name, where specified below, and include your address.

3. Place your completed Statement into the postage-paid return envelope if it is included with these instructions. If a return envelope is not included with these instructions, use your own mailing envelope addressed to our office. Mail, deliver, or have your completed Statement delivered to our office. If you mail your completed Statement using your own envelope, be sure there is sufficient postage and that the address of our office is correct.

4. If you do not wish to send your completed Statement by mail or have it delivered, you may submit your completed Statement by email or facsimile transmission to our office, or by other electronic means if made available, or submit your completed Statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot drop box before the close of the polls on Election Day.

5. Please note that the signature provided on the completed Statement may be added to your registration record to be used for signature comparison purposes in future elections.

SIGNATURE VERIFICATION STATEMENT

I, _____ (please print), am a registered voter of _____ County, State of California.

I declare under penalty of perjury that I received and returned a vote-by-mail or provisional ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I am a resident of the precinct in which I have voted, and I am the person whose name appears on the vote-by-mail or provisional ballot envelope. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this Statement means that my vote-by-mail or provisional ballot will be invalidated.

Your county elections official is required to compare your signature with the signature(s) in your voter registration record, which may include the signature appearing on your driver's license or state identification card.

_____ _____
Voter's Signature Print Full Name (as registered to vote)

_____
Address

UNSIGNED IDENTIFICATION ENVELOPE STATEMENT & INSTRUCTIONS

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THE STATEMENT.
FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. You did not sign your vote-by-mail or provisional ballot identification envelope.

2. To ensure that your ballot for the **November 3, 2026, General Election** will be counted, this completed Unsigned Identification Envelope Statement must be received by our office as soon as possible, but **no later than 5 p.m. on November 25, 2026**. You must sign your name, where specified below, and include your address.

3. Place your completed Statement into the postage-paid return envelope if it is included with these instructions. If a return envelope is not included with these instructions, use your own mailing envelope addressed to our office. Mail, deliver, or have your completed Statement delivered to our office. If you mail your completed Statement using your own envelope, be sure there is sufficient postage and that the address of our office is correct.

4. If you do not wish to send your completed Statement by mail or have it delivered, you may submit your completed Statement by email or facsimile transmission to our office, or by other electronic means if made available, or submit your completed Statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot drop box before the close of the polls on Election Day.

5. Please note that the signature provided on the completed Statement may be added to your registration record to be used for signature comparison purposes in future elections.

UNSIGNED IDENTIFICATION ENVELOPE STATEMENT

I, _____ (please print), am a registered voter of _____ County, State of California.

I declare under penalty of perjury that I received and returned a vote-by-mail or provisional ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I am a resident of the precinct in which I have voted, and I am the person whose name appears on the vote-by-mail or provisional ballot envelope. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this Statement means that my vote-by-mail or provisional ballot will be invalidated.

Your county elections official is required to compare your signature with the signature(s) in your voter registration record, which may include the signature appearing on your driver's license or state identification card.

_____ _____
Voter's Signature Print Full Name (as registered to vote)

_____
Address

COMBINED SIGNATURE VERIFICATION AND

UNSIGNED IDENTIFICATION ENVELOPE STATEMENT & INSTRUCTIONS

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THE STATEMENT.
FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. We have determined either that the signature you provided on your vote-by-mail or provisional ballot identification envelope does not compare with the signature(s) on file in your voter record **OR** that you did not sign your ballot identification envelope.

2. To ensure that your ballot for the **November 3, 2026, General Election** will be counted, this completed Statement must be received by our office as soon as possible, but **no later than 5 p.m. on November 25, 2026**. You must sign your name, where specified below, and include your address.

3. Place your completed Statement into the postage-paid return envelope if it is included with these instructions. If a return envelope is not included with these instructions, use your own mailing envelope addressed to our office. Mail, deliver, or have your completed Statement delivered to our office. If you mail your completed Statement using your own envelope, be sure there is sufficient postage and that the address of our office is correct.

4. If you do not wish to send your completed Statement by mail or have it delivered, you may submit your completed Statement by email or facsimile transmission to our office, or by other electronic means if made available, or submit your completed Statement to a polling place within the county or a ballot drop box before the close of the polls on Election Day.

5. Please note that the signature provided on the completed Statement may be added to your registration record to be used for signature comparison purposes in future elections.

STATEMENT

I, _____ (please print), am a registered voter of _____ County, State of California.

I declare under penalty of perjury that I received and returned a vote-by-mail or provisional ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I am a resident of the precinct in which I have voted, and I am the person whose name appears on the vote-by-mail or provisional ballot envelope. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this Statement means that my vote-by-mail or provisional ballot will be invalidated.

Your county elections official is required to compare your signature with the signature(s) in your voter registration record, which may include the signature appearing on your driver's license or state identification card.

_____ _____
Voter's Signature Print Full Name (as registered to vote)

_____
Address