

To: The Honorable Paul Fong, Assembly Committee on Elections and Redistricting

From: Reed Royalty, President, Orange County Taxpayers Association (OCTax)

Date: May 18, 2011

AB 413 (Yamada): All-Mailed Ballot Elections

OCTax Position: SUPPORT

AB 413 would authorize a pilot “all-mailed ballot” election in Yolo County to test the efficacy of an election where all balloting is done by mail (with at least one polling place and one drop-off location in each city in the County to accommodate those who prefer to vote in person). Yolo County will report to the Legislature and the Secretary of State the success of the election, including cost, turnout of different populations, ballots not counted and reasons they were rejected, and voter fraud.

OCTax analysis

OCTax supports AB 413 because we think the experiment (if successful) may encourage the County of Orange to consider adopting all-mail balloting. In 2009, the Orange County Registrar of Voters studied the issue. His report (based on the experience of the states of Washington and Oregon) reveals possible benefits over polling-place voting, including:

- Savings in Orange County of \$200,000 per election because of the elimination of poll site costs, poll worker training and pay;
- Better opportunity for voters to assess ballot measures and candidates’ qualifications;
- Convenience for voters with disabilities; and
- No discernable increase in voter fraud.

Burbank, California already is using this voting process, with lower cost and no evidence of fraud. If all-mail voting were allowed in all elections in Orange County, the cost of switching to vote-by-mail would be the abandonment of \$47 million in existing voting machines. (There is no demand for voting equipment, so the machines cannot be sold.) Even that cost would not justify continuing to use the voting machines: the \$47 million is “sunk” money; we cannot recover it either way.

cc: Assemblymember Yamada; Orange County Legislative Delegation