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Jerry Brown

Essential Politics September archives: Brown signs new laws and issues vetoes, fall campaigns heat up

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This is the September archive of Essential Politics, our daily feed on California government and politics news.

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Felons in county jails to be allowed to vote in California elections



[Patrick McGreevy](#)



The entrance to the Pitchess Detention Center, a Los Angeles County jail complex in Castaic that includes the North County Correctional Facility. (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)

Despite widespread opposition from law enforcement, Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) on Wednesday signed a bill that will allow thousands of felons in county jails to vote in California elections as part of an effort to speed their transition back into society.

Through a representative, Brown declined to comment on the [bill](#) by Assemblywoman Shirley Weber (D-San Diego), who said it would reduce the likelihood of convicts committing new crimes.

“Civic participation can be a critical component of re-entry and has been linked to reduced recidivism,” Weber said when the bill was introduced.

On Wednesday, Weber said California is setting an example at a time when other state's are trying to limit voting rights.

“I wrote AB 2466 because I want to send a message to the nation that California will not stand for discrimination in voting,” Weber said Wednesday after the bill was signed.

Sen. Patricia Bates (R-Laguna Niguel) criticized the approval of the legislation, which takes effect Jan. 1.

Bates said the new law will undermine the integrity of elections by allowing people in jail to decide close contest.

“It is very disappointing that felons still serving their sentences behind bars will now be able to vote since Governor Brown failed to veto this really bad bill,” Bates said in a statement.

However, the action was praised Wednesday by Daniel Zingale, senior vice president of The California Endowment, a private, statewide health foundation.

“California is stronger and healthier when more people participate in the electoral process,” he said. “Mass disenfranchisement for minor offenses is a tragic legacy of the Jim Crow era that disproportionately affects and diminishes the power of communities of color.”

The measure is opposed by the California State Sheriffs’ Assn. the California Police Chiefs Assn., which argued the state should not be restoring a right traditionally lost when people commit serious crimes until after they leave incarceration.

“We believe that there have to be consequences to your action, and the consequences of being a convicted felon are that you can’t vote and you can’t possess firearms,” said Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood, president of the California State Sheriffs’ Assn.

Updated at 1:45 pm to include new comments from Assemblywoman Weber, Sen. Bates and advocate Daniel Zingale.

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