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April 23, 2015

The Honorable Ben Hueso
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0058

RE: Senate Bill 415- SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hueso,

On behalf of California Common Cause and our members, I am writing with a letter of support for Senate Bill 415 which would increase voter turnout in municipal elections by requiring cities to consolidate local elections with state and federal elections. Doing so would result in a significant increase in voter turnout.

One of the greatest barometers for waning civic engagement in American politics is declining voter turnout in federal, state, and municipal elections. There are many potential contributing factors: general cynicism about government and elected officials, a decline in investment in civics education, and an increasingly transient society.

Yet there is one major contributing factor to low voter turnout –the timing of elections –that could be addressed with a relatively simple policy change. The Public Policy Institute of California surveyed 350 California cities and found that simply moving an election to be synchronized with the even year state elections can result in a 21-36 percent boost in voter turnout for municipal and other local elections. Senate Bill 415 accomplishes this goal by prohibiting municipalities from holding off-cycle elections if doing so results in a significant (25% or more) decline in voter turnout.

For this reason, California Common Cause strongly supports SB 415 and we look forward to working with your office. Please contact me at lpedersen@commoncause.org or (213) 623-1216 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Leila Pedersen
State Program Manager