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July 6, 2015

The Honorable Roger Hernández State Capitol P.O. Box 942849 Sacramento, CA 94249-0058

RE: AB 254 - Election Dates - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Hernández,

On behalf of California Common Cause and our members, I am writing with a letter of support for AB 254, which will require local elections to be held in June or November of odd or even-numbered years. By eliminating two possible local election dates, AB 254 creates additional opportunities for general law cities to consolidate their elections with higher-turnout state elections.

A civically-engaged citizenry is vital to a healthy democracy. While there are myriad factors influencing local voter turnout, as we pointed out in our February 2015 report Getting to 100%, "there is one major contributing factor... – the timing of elections – that could be addressed with a relatively simple policy change." Studies of voter turnout in local elections have illustrated that changes in election timing can double or even triple turnout in subsequent elections. One 2010 study, by Professors Gersen and Berry, found that moving school board elections from odd years to even years consolidated with state elections "produced more than a 150 percent increase in voter turnout." Another study on voter turnout in local elections, published in 2013 by Professors Hajnal and Lewis, indicated that consolidating local elections with state or federal elections can improve municipal turnout by 25 to 36 percent.

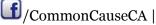
AB 254 does not require even-year consolidated elections, which Common Cause endorses. However, by narrowing the number of "established election dates," AB 254 is a step in that direction and provides municipalities that must change their election dates with a considerable opportunity to consolidate with higher-turnout, and more representative, state elections. Where we can improve voter turnout, we can increase civic engagement, and thereby strengthen the democratic process to work at its best for every citizen.

For these reasons, California Common Cause strongly supports AB 254. Please contact me at nheidorn@commoncause.org or (916) 520-4070 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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