

May 6, 2010

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Special Election for Senate District 15

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the Boards of Supervisors of the Counties of Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz, we write to urge you to reconsider your proclamation calling for a special election to fill the vacancy in Senate District 15. If the two special elections are conducted, our counties will incur significant and unanticipated costs and be presented with operational challenges. Additionally, voters who will be asked to participate in four elections in six months may be confused, which may cause fewer people to cast their votes. The consolidation of the special election with the November general election would alleviate many of our concerns and reduce our counties' costs.

Collectively, it will cost our counties \$6 million to conduct two special elections. None of our counties anticipated this expense nor are we in any financial position to absorb these costs. Counties, like the State, are facing continued budget deficits. We simply do not have discretionary funds or financial reserves to pay these unexpected expenses.

We are also concerned about the operational challenges that our respective elections staff will face to conduct these elections, particularly in light of the upcoming June primary and the compressed timeline for the special election. It will be extremely difficult to secure enough polling places and sufficient poll workers for the proposed primary election on June 22, which is only two weeks after the June 8 statewide primary.

We also believe that the schedule for the special election will create confusion among voters, which may reduce voter participation in each of the upcoming four elections. For example, it is likely that some permanent mail-in voters in our counties will receive special election primary ballots in the mail before they have filled out their ballots for the June 8 statewide primary.

Although we understand your interest in filling the Senate vacancy as soon as possible, the special elections that you have called will cost our counties significant money, strain our ability to hold efficient and accurate elections, and create confusion among voters. These are serious concerns that could be addressed with the consolidation of the Senate District 15 special election with the November general election.

We strongly urge you to reconsider your proclamation and consolidate the vacancy election with the regularly scheduled elections.

Sincerely,

Simón Salinas
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of Monterey

Frank R. Mecham
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of San Luis Obispo

Joseph Centeno
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Barbara

Ken Yeager
President, Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Clara

Tony Campos
Chairperson, Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Cruz