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*Acting Director*

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
**California Department of Public Health**



GAVIN NEWSOM  
*Governor*

August 18, 2020

Dear Secretary Padilla,

It has come to my attention that local jurisdictions—including counties, school districts, and institutions of higher education—would value clarification of the current state public health order as it relates to voting and voting operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it may apply to public buildings hosting polling stations.

It is my understanding that most counties will provide [three days of early voting](#) in-person starting the Saturday before the November General Election. Additionally, ballot drop-box locations will be available between October 6 and November 3, 2020.

I am aware that sections 12283 and 12284 of the Elections Code require public buildings to be made available (as set forth in those sections) to elections officials upon request. The Governor has not suspended Elections Code section 12283 or section 12284, and no provisions in the current state public health orders and directives prevent the use of public buildings as polling places or vote centers, or in connection with other election-related activity (such as the hosting of ballot drop-boxes). Although current guidance limits nonessential visitors and activities to K-12 and higher education campuses, the guidance does not restrict the use of those sites for election-related activities—which, from the time the first stay-at-home order was imposed, have been consistently designated as essential activities.

Your office has released detailed [guidance for the safe administration of elections](#) during COVID-19. In my judgment as Acting State Public Health Officer, these guidelines provide an appropriate framework to conduct in-person voting with reduced risk of transmission, regardless of whether those buildings have resumed normal operations at the time they are used for election-related activities.

Sincerely,

Erica Pan, M.D., M.P.H.  
Acting State Health Officer