



May 15, 2024

**VIA Online Portal to Author and Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments**

The Honorable Evan Low  
California State Assembly  
1021 O St. Ste. 6110  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 884 (Low) – Elections: language accessibility – SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Low:

**The League of Women Voters of California writes to support AB 884 (Low)**, which would expand California's language access support for voter registration and voting to more language communities in California and improve the quality of the language access support required by law.

California has the nation's highest proportion of households that speak a language other than English at home, and millions of Californians who identify as limited-English proficient (LEP). Depending on whether these individuals belong to language communities that meet specific definitions in either federal or state code, they have access to differing levels of support for interacting with our electoral systems.

The federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) ensures translations of election related materials, including votable ballots, and recruitment of bilingual poll workers for language communities meeting specified county-based thresholds. However, these protections exclude anyone who does not speak Spanish, an Asian language, or a native language. This means the federal law offers nothing to speakers of Amharic, Armenian, Arabic, Russian, Somali, and others. Moreover, the federal law must be reauthorized from time to time and will not provide any coverage if it is not reauthorized by 2032.

AB 884 would essentially codify the federal language access law; however, AB 884 would not limit assistance to any language group. In other words, any language group that reaches the established threshold would be entitled to language assistance. AB 884 also uses a 10,000 or 5% threshold based on voting age adults rather than adult citizens to reflect the reality that individuals are

Assemblymember Low

Page 2

May 15, 2024

becoming citizens every day. This is also consistent with California practice, as found in Elections Code Section 14201, which applies for smaller language populations.

For smaller language communities, AB 884 would require counties to provide translated votable ballots rather than the inferior reference ballots currently required under state law. AB 884 would also expand the number of languages covered by removing the same federal limits, which was imposed by an appellate court. In other words, voters who speak Amharic, Armenian, Arabic, Russian, Somali, and the various other languages would be entitled to translated votable ballots if their communities reach the 3% precinct threshold already established by state law.

The League of Women Voters of California supports AB 884 because language access in California is currently inadequate to support our diverse electorate. AB 884 would strengthen our democracy by ensuring that all immigrant and LEP voters have equal access to the ballot.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephanie Doute". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

Stephanie Doute  
Executive Director