

Assembly Bill No. 182

Passed the Assembly September 8, 2015

Chief Clerk of the Assembly

Passed the Senate September 3, 2015

Secretary of the Senate

This bill was received by the Governor this _____ day
of _____, 2015, at _____ o'clock ____M.

Private Secretary of the Governor

CHAPTER _____

An act to add the heading of Article 1 (commencing with Section 14025) and the heading of Article 2 (commencing with Section 14027) to, and to add Article 3 (commencing with Section 14040) to, Chapter 1.5 of Division 14 of the Elections Code, relating to elections.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 182, Alejo. California Voting Rights Act of 2001.

Existing law, the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 (CVRA), prohibits the use of an at-large election in a political subdivision if it would impair the ability of a protected class, as defined, to elect candidates of its choice or otherwise influence the outcome of an election. The CVRA provides that a voter who is a member of a protected class may bring an action in superior court to enforce the provisions of the CVRA, and, if the voter prevails in the case, he or she may be awarded reasonable litigation costs and attorney's fees. The CVRA requires a court to implement appropriate remedies, including the imposition of district-based elections, that are tailored to remedy a violation of the act.

This bill would prohibit the use of a district-based election in a political subdivision if it would impair the ability of a protected class, as defined, to elect candidates of its choice. The bill would require a court to implement specified remedies upon a finding that a district-based election was imposed or applied in a manner that impaired the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares that the purpose of this act is to address ongoing vote dilution and discrimination in voting as matters of statewide concern, in order to enforce the fundamental rights guaranteed to California voters under Section 7 of Article I and Section 2 of Article II of the California Constitution. Therefore, the provisions of this act shall be construed liberally in furtherance of this legislative intent to

eliminate minority vote dilution. It is the further intent of the Legislature that any remedy implemented under this act shall comply with the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Legislature also finds and declares that this act is consistent with the decision of the Court of Appeal in *Sanchez v. City of Modesto* (2006) 145 Cal.App.4th 660.

SEC. 2. The heading of Article 1 (commencing with Section 14025) is added to Chapter 1.5 of Division 14 of the Elections Code, to read:

Article 1. General Provisions

SEC. 3. The heading of Article 2 (commencing with Section 14027) is added to Chapter 1.5 of Division 14 of the Elections Code, to read:

Article 2. At-Large Elections

SEC. 4. Article 3 (commencing with Section 14040) is added to Chapter 1.5 of Division 14 of the Elections Code, to read:

Article 3. District-Based Elections

14040. District-based elections shall not be imposed or applied in a manner that impairs the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice as a result of the dilution or the abridgment of the rights of voters who are members of a protected class.

14041. (a) A violation of Section 14040 is established if it is shown that racially polarized voting occurs in elections for members of the governing body of the political subdivision or in elections incorporating other electoral choices by the voters of the political subdivision. Elections conducted prior to the filing of an action pursuant to Section 14040 and this section are more probative to establish the existence of racially polarized voting than elections conducted after the filing of the action.

(b) The occurrence of racially polarized voting shall be determined from examining results of elections in which at least one candidate is a member of a protected class or elections involving ballot measures, or other electoral choices that affect the rights and privileges of members of a protected class. One

circumstance that may be considered in determining a violation of Section 14040 and this section is the extent to which candidates who are members of a protected class and who are preferred by voters of the protected class, as determined by an analysis of voting behavior, have been elected to the governing body of a political subdivision that is the subject of an action based on Section 14040 and this section.

(c) The fact that members of a protected class are not geographically compact or concentrated does not preclude a finding of racially polarized voting, or a violation of Section 14040 and this section, but may be a factor in determining an appropriate remedy.

(d) Proof of an intent on the part of the voters or elected officials to discriminate against a protected class is not required.

(e) Other factors such as the history of discrimination, the use of electoral devices or other voting practices or procedures that may enhance the dilutive effects of the election system, denial of access to those processes determining which groups of candidates will receive financial or other support in a given election, the extent to which members of a protected class bear the effects of past discrimination in areas such as education, employment, and health, which hinder their ability to participate effectively in the political process, and the use of overt or subtle racial appeals in political campaigns are probative, but not necessary factors, to establish a violation of Section 14040 and this section.

(f) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the fact that a district-based election was imposed on the political subdivision as a result of an action filed pursuant to Article 2 shall not be a defense to an action alleging a violation of this article.

(2) (A) If a court orders a political subdivision to adopt, and subsequently approves, a district-based election system as a result of an action filed pursuant to Article 2, there shall be a rebuttable presumption in any subsequent action filed pursuant to this article that the district-based election system of that political subdivision does not violate this article. The presumption shall apply only to the exact district-based election system that was approved by the court and shall not apply if the boundaries of the districts of the political subdivision are subsequently adjusted for any reason.

(B) This paragraph shall apply only to a district-based election system that is approved by a court on or after January 1, 2016.

14042. (a) Upon a finding of a violation of Sections 14040 and 14041, the court shall implement an effective district-based elections system that provides the protected class the opportunity to elect candidates of its choice from single-member districts.

(b) If additional effective districts under subdivision (a) are not possible without increasing the size of the governing body, or will not alone provide an appropriate remedy, the court may order additional remedies, including any of the following:

(1) Incrementally increasing the size of the governing body upon approval of voters in the jurisdiction.

(2) Approving a single-member district-based election system that provides the protected class the opportunity to join in a coalition of two or more protected classes to elect candidates of their choice if there is demonstrated political cohesion among the protected classes.

(3) Requiring elections of the governing body to be held on the same day as a statewide election, as provided in Section 1001, taking into account in any such remedial determination the capacity of the county to consolidate the election date with statewide elections.

(4) Issuing an injunction to delay an election.

14043. In any action to enforce Sections 14040 and 14041, the court shall allow the prevailing plaintiff party, other than the state or political subdivision thereof, a reasonable attorney's fee consistent with the standards established in *Serrano v. Priest* (1977) 20 Cal.3d 25, 48-49, and litigation expenses including, but not limited to, expert witness fees and expenses as part of the costs. Prevailing defendant parties shall not recover any costs, unless the court finds the action to be frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation.

14044. Any voter who is a member of a protected class and who resides in a political subdivision where a violation of Sections 14040 and 14041 is alleged may file an action pursuant to those sections in the superior court of the county in which the political subdivision is located.

14045. If any provision of this article or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, Articles 1, 2 and the remainder of this article, or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances, shall not be affected.

Approved _____, 2015

Governor