

Submitter: Kevin Hoar
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB579

I wish to raise areas of concern regarding Senate Bill 579. The exercise of free will in a free and fair election is a cornerstone of our electoral system and essential in ensuring public trust in our system of choosing elected officials. Senate Bill 579 promises to take one of our most vulnerable populations and expose them to coercion and undue influence while incarcerated in our state's prison system.

Prisons are renowned for being rife with illegal activity, such as drug trafficking, violence, organized crime, and gang activity, from which prisoners have little or no refuge. For all of its advantages, our vote-by-mail system poses a specific concern that, without the secrecy and privacy of a voting booth, prisoners can easily be coerced to disclose for whom and what their ballot is being cast. Security in the chain of custody of ballots is an entirely different challenge within a prison than outside amongst the general public.

To propose that felons, while they are imprisoned, should be subjected to the specter of **UNDUE INFLUENCE** by potentially corrupt prison employees, notorious prison gangs, and unethical elected officials is utterly hostile to the principle of free and fair elections, and likely dangerous to prisoners themselves. Will the prison employees be conducting ballot harvesting? Will the Aryan Nation prison gang ballot harvest? What, in the administration of our prison system, can we point to guarantee that this will be prevented from becoming prevalent in our prison system?

In addition, I see no provisions in this bill to guarantee that prisoners receive a broad array of unbiased election information and candidate interaction. We must ask ourselves, who will be controlling this flow of information?

Unless you can answer with confidence these obvious questions and concerns of how voting by felons in captivity will receive election information and how their ballots will be controlled, distributed, completed, and collected, and free of **UNDUE INFLUENCE**, then this proposed law appears to amount to a sham attempt to manipulate the vote and damage public trust in our election system. I encourage you to properly reject the notion that incarcerated prisoners ought to vote and make the only ethical decision and **OPPOSE SB 579**.