

Brown OKs election-day voter registration for future contests

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

Californians will someday be able to register to vote on election day under legislation signed into law Monday by Gov. Jerry Brown.

Assemblyman Mike Feuer, D-Los Angeles, wrote the measure to increase voter participation in elections. The current law says voters must register at least 15 days before an election.

“Voting – the sacred right of every citizen – should be simple and convenient,” Brown said in a statement. “While other states try to restrict voters with new laws that burden the process, California allows voters to register online – and even on Election Day.”

The measure becomes law Jan. 1, 2013, but election-day voter registration will not begin until after the California secretary of state begins operating Vote-Cal, a much delayed statewide voter database, which will allow real-time verification of whether applicants are registered in other counties.

VoteCal is not expected to be up and running until 2015, said Nicole Winger, a spokeswoman for the secretary of state.

“This new law will help assure that all eligible Californians will have the chance to determine who speaks for them in Washington, Sacramento and their hometowns,” Feuer said in a statement Monday. “By recognizing the importance of increasing voter turnout in our state, we are improving the democratic process in California.”

The measure was opposed by many Republican lawmakers, including Assemblyman Tim Donnelly of San Bernardino, who felt the change, combined with a new online voter registration system, would lead to voter fraud. "A free and secure election system is the bedrock of a constitutional Republic," Donnelly said. "Along with the new motor-voter process of registration, same-day registration and the new online registration system, our elections are becoming less and less secure."

Brown's signature will allow California to join 10 other states that allow some form of election-day registration, including Connecticut, Idaho, Minnesota and Wisconsin.