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**PRESS
RELEASE**

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Absentee Period Opens

Three Choices – NO Excuses!

(Redwood City, CA) The San Mateo County Elections Offices will begin issuing absentee ballots to registered voters for the November 7th Gubernatorial General Election as the vote by mail period officially begins Tuesday, October 10th.

According to Warren Slocum, San Mateo County's Chief Elections Officer, voters have three choices when it comes to absentee balloting. "Voters have three choices so there is no excuse for not voting by mail," Slocum said. An easy way to request an absentee ballot is to send us a written request. There is a request form located on the back panel of the Sample Ballot or a simple letter will suffice – that letter should include the voter's registered address and if needed, the address that the voter wants the ballot material mailed to them as well as their original signature; it must be dated. The letter can be faxed to the Elections Office at (650) 312-5348 or mailed to 40 Tower Road, San Mateo, CA 94402. An even easier way to request an absentee ballot is to complete the online application on our election web site at www.shapethefuture.org/absentee/absentee_ballot.asp. Finally, a voter can go to the Elections Office at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo or the Redwood City office at 555 County Center on the 1st floor to personally apply and pick up an absentee ballot. "That ballot can be voted at the elections office or the voter can take it home," Slocum advised.

Permanent absentee voters, voters who have made a one time request to permanently vote by mail, will automatically receive their absentee voting materials around October 12th. Nearly 125,000 or 36% of all registered voters in San Mateo County are Permanent Absentee Voters (PAVs).

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“Any absentee voter who has voted their ballot at home may bring their ballots to the office or any of the City Halls and drop them off in this 29 day period before the election. Many people choose to do this. As it gets closer to Election Day, there will be a steady stream of voters coming in for services or stopping by to drop off their ballot because they’re in the neighborhood,”

Slocum said. The offices are open Monday-Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm as well as the two Saturdays prior to Election Day, Oct. 28th and Nov. 4th.

As of the September 8, 2006, 60 days before the close of registration, the County reported having 346,776 registered voters.

“I would like to encourage any voter who thinks they might like to sign up to vote by mail to do so,” Slocum remarked. “We have an excellent vote by mail program, an easy online program that allows voters to track their voted ballot, and we find that the participation of voters who vote by mail is greater. Our web based ballot tracker program, Track & Confirm, located on the homepage of www.shapethefuture.org gives voters greater peace of mind because they can see when their ballot was received at the elections office.

In a survey conducted last year by the California Voter Foundation, the primary reason for voting by mail is: convenience. People like having the opportunity to vote when they can, from wherever they are, with just a stamp. It’s easier than fitting it into a hectic schedule on a Tuesday.

Leading California pollster Mark DiCamillo, Director of the Field Poll, commented that California politics has undergone a shift in California with the rise in voting by mail. He maintains that California will not experience really low voter turnout because so many voters have signed up to become permanent absentee voters and these voters have a history of active participation, with turnouts greater than those generated at the polls.

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