



September 4, 2014

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor, State of California
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 844/Pavley – SUPPORT

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the California Voter Foundation (CVF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the voting process to better serve voters, I'm writing to urge you to sign Senate Bill 844, authored by Senator Fran Pavley.

If enacted, SB 844 makes simple but important changes that will provide California voters with essential information to help them make informed voting decisions on propositions. Specifically, SB 844:

- 1) Directs the Secretary of State to compile and report online the total amount of money raised to support and oppose each proposition on the ballot.

Knowing the total amount raised by proposition campaigns helps voters sort out the different measures on the ballot, enabling them to quickly identify measures that are heavily financed and advertised. Nonprofit groups such as CVF and Maplight have historically provided this data but nonprofits' ability to disseminate it to voters is minimal compared to the Secretary of State.

- 2) Directs the Secretary of State to create a web site that consolidates information about proposition funding, including lists of top donors to each side of each proposition, and to let voters know about these resources in the state Voter Information Guide.

Top donors' lists will be compiled by the Fair Political Practices Commission thanks to the enactment of Senate Bill 27/Correa (another bill we strongly supported). Knowing who the top donors are is another piece of information that helps voters quickly determine the interests behind propositions. By making this important data accessible on the Secretary of State's web site, SB 844 adds value to SB 27 by ensuring these lists reach a wider audience than they would if they reside only on the FPPC's site.

SB 844 enjoys strong bipartisan support and is also supported by numerous nonpartisan voter advocacy groups including California Common Cause, the League of Women Voters,

Maplight, California Clean Money Campaign and California Forward.

While it may seem unnecessary to direct the Secretary of State to provide these services, we have found that the present and past Secretaries of State are often reluctant to take on additional tasks that are not specified in code due to limited resources and also out of concern that doing so could be conceived as being a political act designed to benefit or harm a particular candidate or issue. Therefore it is important that such duties be spelled out in statute.

SB 844 also includes language describing the criteria to be used to determine the total amounts raised and spent on each proposition. This language was worked out between the advocates, the Secretary of State's staff and Senator Pavley's staff to ensure it satisfies all parties.

To see an example of the benefit this information will bring to voters, please take a look at the funding data provided on Maplight's Voter's Edge web site for Prop. 45, a health insurance-related initiative on the November ballot. It's accessible at: <http://votersedge.org/california/ballot-measures/2014/november/prop-45>. This is a confusing proposition but the aggregate totals raised speak volumes. Proponents have raised \$701,300, while opponents have raised \$37.6 million as of August 21. If you sign SB 844, this kind of data will appear on the Secretary of State's web site where many more voters are likely to see it, along with the lists of top donors compiled by the FPCC.

CVF seeks to expand voters' access to proposition funding data because voters strongly support having more access to such information. Numerous public opinion polls by the Public Policy Institute of California find 80 percent of California voters support more ballot proposition funding disclosure. Having the Secretary of State's Voter Information Guide help voters access this kind of information is vital because it is a voter education resource that is widely viewed by voters as trustworthy and influential, and also has great reach (both online and in print).

While a previous bill that similarly sought to expand voter access to information about proposition donors was vetoed in 2011 (SB 334/DeSaulnier), this one addresses your concerns by providing the disclosure information online, where it can be updated, rather than in the printed guide, and using the print guide to direct voters to the online resource.

We appreciate your consideration and are available should your staff have any questions or wish to discuss SB 844 further. I can be reached at 916-441-2494 or via email at kimalex@calvoter.org.

Sincerely,

Kim Alexander
President & Founder