



August 15, 2018

Honorable Chair Germond and Commissioners
Fair Political Practices Commission
1102 Q Street, Suite 3000
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: AB 84 (MULLIN) - URGE YOUR OPPOSITION - 7/5/18

Dear Honorable Chair Germond and Commissioners,

California Voices for Progress (CA V4P) urges the California Fair Political Practices Commission to stand with us, and other good government groups, and oppose AB 84 (Mullin, D-San Mateo). AB 84, as fully amended on July 5, would increase the flow of money into our political system, undemocratically consolidate financial influence in determining who should and should not serve in statewide office and allow special interest money to flow into campaigns at a time when giant reforms are being made to counter this.

CA V4P is a community of over one hundred business owners, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and other influential leaders who advocate to protect our climate; ensure equality and expand opportunity; and strengthen representative democracy. CA V4P members believe representative democracy is strengthened by ensuring big money stays out of politics, by promoting transparency in campaign finances, and by protecting voter participation. To this end, since 2015, CA V4P has helped pass bills to: amend the ban on voter-funded campaigns (SB 1107 (Allen, D-Santa Monica)); upgrade CalAccess for greater campaign funding transparency (SB 1349 (Hertzberg, D-Van Nuys)); and, strengthen disclosure requirements for political funding by passing the CA DISCLOSE Act (AB 249 (Mullin, D-San Mateo)).

While V4P members appreciate the modest transparency measures in the bill provided by the increase in campaign disclosure reports, we are deeply troubled by the consequences to our state's campaign finance system stemming from Section 4 of the bill. Section 4 allows for the creation of four new political party committees, called "Legislative Caucus Committees," each directed by the respective caucus leaders of the Assembly Democrats, the Assembly Republicans, the Senate Democrats, and the Senate Republicans. We are troubled by these Legislative Caucus Committees because: 1) more money will likely be brought into our political system as a result of these caucuses; 2) these committees are not adequately accountable to

everyday Californians; and 3) the type of money that will likely be raised will further increase the influence of moneyed special interests in Sacramento.

Under AB 84, the amount of money flowing into our political system would likely greatly increase. Assembly and Senate Caucus leaders would be able to form and direct a new kind of political party committee that can receive individual donations of up to \$36,500 for the purpose of giving to state candidates. This is more than eight times what they can currently receive in their own committees. They could then give unlimited contributions to state candidate committees. They would also be able to spend unlimited amounts of money for independent expenditures on candidates.

These committees are not adequately accountable to everyday Californians and are an undemocratic consolidation of financial influence. Currently, the only political party committees in our state that have the ability to raise and contribute funds in such large amounts are state and county party committees. The donations are directed to the campaigns of candidates who are endorsed by the California Democratic Party and the California Republican Party, respectively. The endorsements of each party are decided by hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of individual party members. These party members are Californians of every race, ethnicity, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, and background imaginable. Many are elected by their communities specifically to represent the interests of everyday Californians and to be the voice of their party's voters in matters involving elected officials, campaigns, and pending legislation. These existing party committees are allowed by law to raise and contribute larger amounts precisely because they represent not one special interest but the will of a broad cross-section of the California population. AB 84, by contrast, allows legislative caucus leaders to ignore the voice and votes of the members of each party by creating an alternative political party committee controlled not by large numbers of members of California communities but by a very few members of legislative leadership in Sacramento.

Additionally, we are concerned about the lack of safeguards against special interest money that can flood into state elections under AB 84. As an example, the California Democratic Party has, due to the deference given to the will of community representatives, put tight parameters on the type of funds it will not accept, including from the fossil fuel industry, the private prison industry, and the tobacco industry. Considering the amount of funds raised and spent by the Party each year, this makes a significant difference in the sources of funds used in California elections. Party members have organized to ensure such contributions are not accepted because California communities are concerned about the influence of these moneyed special interests on state policy. California community members are not able to exert the same type of control and influence over what funds are accepted by committees controlled by a very few members of legislative leadership. At a time when significant campaign finance reforms are being made to take deep-pocketed special interest money out of politics, AB 84 would open the door to let more special interest money back into our elections.

Finally, we hope that you would agree that any changes to the Political Reform Act to this large of a degree should be made only after a thorough and careful review that allows the public every opportunity to provide input. By contrast, this bill was completely amended into another bill the day before the legislature's summer recess, and there is an urgency measure on the bill so it would go into effect before the 2018 November elections. The bill has not had the benefit of a year of review through the regular legislative cycle. The Political Reform Act is too consequential to change in such a rushed manner without thorough consideration.

The public is rightfully questioning why it is necessary for a change of this magnitude to occur so quickly and without the regular processes for review. The bill has received no official support in the only hearing held thus far, but numerous good governance organizations and individuals have publicly opposed the bill. At a time when public trust in government has eroded so greatly, it is more important than ever to demonstrate to the people of California that their elected representatives are deliberative and cautious when passing legislation that would increase the representatives' own political power. We urge the FPPC to be the independent voice of caution the public is searching for right now, and to withhold your support for this bill both because of its substance and because the process engaged in is not appropriate for a bill of this type.

We hope that you will take our thoughts into consideration as you take action on this bill tomorrow. For these reasons and more, we regretfully must take an oppose unless amended position on this bill. Please contact Evan Minton, California Voices for Progress State Policy Manager, if you have any questions. He can be reached at eminton@voicesforprogress.org.

Thank you,

Sandra K. Fluke
California State & Western Region Director

cc: Phillip Ung, Director of Legislation and External Affairs