



April 14, 2023

Members Assembly Committee on Elections
Assembly Member Isaac Bryan, Chair

AB 421

OPPOSE

Members of the Assembly Committee on Elections,

Election Integrity Project® *California*, Inc. (EIPCa) **Strongly Opposes AB 421.**

AB 421 is quite openly an assault on the right of California citizens to engage in Direct Democracy through the initiative process. It is designed, in part, to make the initiative process so burdensome that few citizens will be willing or able to participate by requiring all potential signature gatherers to:

- Register with the State and become credentialed
- Take a State-sponsored training course in signature gathering (is there a cost? how, when, where? the bill does not specify)

Gone would be the days when citizens could download and print a blank petition form, interact with their family, friends and neighbors and collect signatures for an initiative close to their heart and political convictions.

Gone would be the days when citizen organizations could place petitions on tables at their events to allow those desiring to do so to sign petitions of their choice.

Gone would be the days of Direct Democracy, where the voice of the people could and must be heard in the State Capitol and heeded.

In place of the above characteristics of a thriving Republic would be a burdensome bureaucratic labyrinth of rules, regulations and obstructions to the people's right to Direct Democracy.

The bill is also a burden on the existing State bureaucracy, replete with complex requirements that put an enormous burden on the Elections Offices and the Secretary of State's Office.

- It mandates that 10% of signatures be collected by unpaid volunteers. In a statewide effort, as all initiatives are, who will be responsible for determining that percentage and how?
- Someone (**the bill does not specify who**) must
 - **create** the forms, requirements and elements of execution of how and when potential signature gatherers would become registered, along with the details of the State database for records of trained individuals (is it a lifetime credentialing or one requiring updating? if the latter, how often and how?)
 - **create** the mandatory signature gatherer training course
 - **determine** how it can be implemented and bring it to fruition

- **train** and **pay** untold numbers of people to provide the training for signature gatherers
- Someone (**the bill does not specify who**) must put a plan in place to determine
 - the total number of signatures gathered and the total gathered by un-paid volunteers.
 - whether the 10% threshold has been achieved.

The above defects in AB 421 only begin to scratch the surface of how incomplete and ill thought-out this proposal is.

The mandates of AB 421 will suppress Direct Democracy in California and impose an incalculable work and financial burden on the State's electoral bureaucracy. If passed, it may languish unimplemented due to the lack of specificity and the inability of the State to accommodate and implement the number of impractical, even unachievable mandates.

We urge you to see the defects in AB 421, however well-intended, and vote NO.

Sincerely,

ELECTION INTEGRITY PROJECT® *CALIFORNIA*, INC

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