



April 14, 2023

Members Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee
Senator Steven M. Glazer, Chair

SB: 24

OPPOSE

Members of the Committee,

Election Integrity Project® *California*, Inc. (EIPCa) **Opposes SB 24** as written and amended as of the date of this letter.

While many of the stated goals are laudable, the bill has a fatal flaw in not meeting its prime directive.

SB 24 would laudably make public funds available for bona fide candidates who are at a financial and name-recognition disadvantage, **BUT** that benefit is **cancelled out by the fact that** incumbents would have equal access to those funds. This would enable them to add to their financial advantage with money they do not need. **The financial differential between incumbents and candidates with special interest backing and up-and-coming challengers would remain the same.**

The bill does nothing to eliminate or even reduce the influence of special interest money on politics and political campaigns.

Unless public funds are the ONLY source of campaign financing allowed, and distributed equally among all candidates meeting reasonable standards of viability, those the bill purports to incentivize and assist would be fighting the same financial disadvantage as before dipping into the public largess. There would be no change to the status quo.

Furthermore, allowing incumbents to accept public funding constitutes a conflict of interest and risks candidates and their parties becoming organs of the State rather than parts of civil society. If all or a substantial amount of a candidate's funding comes from the State rather than from voluntary sources, political parties risk losing their ties to the people they seek to represent. In the same way that private donations can come with demands on candidate behavior, the State can use public funds to encourage (or force) parties or candidates to behave as they expect, i.e., unethical influence.

There are other reasons SB 24 is flawed:

- Citizens "contribute" to public funds non-voluntarily (taxes, etc.) but through elections and other citizen activism they at least have input into how their hard-earned dollars are spent.

Citizens contribute to campaigns and causes voluntarily as an exercise of democratic freedom.

SB 24 would make citizens involuntary contributors to politicians and causes they oppose and would never contribute to voluntarily. This amounts to forced redistribution of wealth, or even extortion.

- SB 24 is vague in that it does not specify how the distribution of funds would work. There are three models of public funding emerging across the country.
 - The first requires candidates to first demonstrate they have public support by collecting a specified amount of private money. In exchange they get money from the State.
 - In the second, the government matches private campaign donations and sometimes increases them by a designated multiplier. Tom Latkowski, cofounder of LA for Democracy Vouchers argues that these programs are ineffective. “Fundamentally, what matching funds do is they move the center of power from the super rich, who can give the maximum contribution limit, to just the very rich. The matching funds do nothing to help the vast majority of Angelenos who aren’t donating at all.”
 - The third utilizes vouchers.

A bill that mandates the WHAT and WHY without providing the HOW at best does nothing to advance its cause and at worst injects chaos into the system.

- Public funding diverts public moneys intended to benefit the whole of the people to politicians. This is unfair to the body politic.
- SB 24 does not address the topic of Super PACs and Dark Money.

EIPCa strongly urges a NO vote on SB 24 in its current form.

Sincerely,

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