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April 20th, 2010

Board of Supervisors
800 S. Victoria Ave.
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR PROPOSITION 15 "CALIFORNIA FAIR ELECTIONS ACT"

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a position of "Support" for Proposition 15 the "California Fair Elections Act."

DISCUSSION:

Proposition 15, the "California Fair Elections Act," was placed on the ballot by the Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger. This measure asks the voters to support voluntary public campaign financing for the position of California Secretary of State for the 2014 and 2018 elections, to be paid for by an increase on the state lobbyist registration fee.

With the U.S. Supreme Court's recent 5-4 decision striking down decades-old prohibitions on corporate funding of campaigns, the need for effective campaign finance reform is greater than ever. Public financing of campaigns is the only effective strategy to enable candidates to overcome the tremendous disadvantage of being grossly outspent by special interests. Public campaign financing is in effect in several states, including Arizona, where Governor Napolitano was the first governor elected with public financing. Proposition 15 is modeled on the Fair Elections systems now working in Arizona, Maine, and Connecticut.

Proposition 15 would raise the registration fee on lobbyists from \$12.50 (one of the lowest in the nation) to \$350 per year, which will provide sufficient revenue to fully fund competitive campaigns for Secretary of State. Candidates that agree to accept public funding cannot raise or spend additional money. To qualify for public funding, candidates must first obtain 7,500 five-dollar contributions from registered voters to demonstrate broad support. Independent or third-party candidates must obtain 15,000 five-dollar contributions to receive full funding, or 3,750 contributions to receive 1/4 funding.

As California's chief elections officer, the Secretary of State is an appropriate, and affordable, State office in which to demonstrate the effectiveness of public campaign financing, and lobbyist registration fees are surely an appropriate funding source for assuring a "level playing field" in elections. An additional benefit is that Proposition 15 also repeats the ban on public financing of local election campaigns.

A summary sheet is attached and the full text of the State Legislative Analyst's analysis of the measure is provided on-line.

Cordially,



Steve Bennett
Supervisor, First District



Kathy I. Long
Supervisor, Third District

Attachment