



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CALIFORNIA

May 17, 2016

Chair Jodi Remke
Commissioner Maria Audero
Commissioner Eric Casher
Commissioner Gavin Wasserman
Commissioner Patricia Wynne
Fair Political Practices Commission
428 J Street, Suite 620
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 2523 (Mullin)—Local Elective Offices: Contribution Limitations
May 2016 Agenda Item 31**

Dear Chair Remke and Commissioners:

The League of Women Voters of California supports AB 2523 (Mullin), which establishes a standard limit (currently \$4,200) for contributions to candidates running for local elected office in jurisdictions that have not adopted their own contribution limits. We urge the FPPC to adopt a stance of “Support if amended” or “Neutral with recommended amendments” on this bill instead of the staff recommendation of an “Oppose unless amended” position.

The League of Women Voters believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should enhance political equality for all citizens, ensure transparency and the public’s right to know who is using money to influence elections, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete equitably for public office, and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process. We support realistic limits on contributions by individuals and groups to candidates.

We believe that limiting the size of contributions strengthens our representative democracy and curbs potential corruption and undue influence. However, while existing law allows counties, cities, and districts to limit campaign contributions, considerably less than a third in California do so. Many local contributions exceed the size of contributions allowed for state elected officials, and in some cases, candidates may be dependent on just a few large donors to fund their campaigns. AB 2523 would establish a realistic default limit on contributions in local campaigns, set at the same level as for state legislative campaigns. It would extend these contribution limits to all local jurisdictions while giving flexibility to local governments which might choose to set a different limit.

We do not agree with several of the points in your staff’s Legislative Update and the recommendation on this bill. As noted, the Political Reform Act explicitly authorizes the Legislature to enact campaign restrictions outside of the PRA. AB 2523 simply replaces

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the current language in the Elections and Education Codes that permits such restrictions with language that requires the default limit if a local government agency does not choose to enact its own limits. Similarly, we are unaware of confusion regarding advice and enforcement in those jurisdictions that have already enacted local contribution limits, and thus we feel that any confusion that should arise as a result of this bill can be minimized. The benefits of having contribution limits in all local elections should greatly outweigh the effort needed to craft systems for regulation and enforcement.

As the chief proponent of the bill, California Common Cause, points out, “There is a clear need and public support for contribution limits. . . . Of the 38 states that have contribution limits, only four, including California, do not also have local limits.” It is time to address that situation, and we urge you to do that by adopting a position of support or neutrality on AB 2523 while working for any necessary amendments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen L. Hutchison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent dot over the 'i' in Hutchison.

Helen L. Hutchison
President

cc: Assembly Member Kevin Mullin