

California State Senate

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September 18, 2019

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Recommended Veto of AB 1451 (Low)

Dear Governor Newsom:

I respectfully write to request your veto of AB 1451, which makes it a criminal offense to pay initiative, referendum, or recall petition circulators on a per-signature basis, and which requires initiative proponents to obtain 10% of all signatures needed to qualify a measure from non-paid, volunteer circulators while providing an exemption from the 10% volunteer circulator requirement for unions and other non-profit organizations that obtain signatures with their paid members and employees.

First, California already requires more signatures to qualify an initiative than most other states, and has one of the shortest circulation periods. By prohibiting the payment of petition circulators on a per-signature basis, this bill will make it much more difficult and expensive to qualify initiatives and referenda. In fact, in a veto statement of a similar bill, AB 1947 (Low), from last session, your predecessor said "*...per signature payment is often the most cost-effective method for collecting the hundreds of thousands of signatures needed to qualify a ballot measure. Eliminating this option will drive up the cost of circulating ballot measures, thereby further favoring the wealthiest interests.*"

Second, this bill would unfairly allow unions and non-profit organizations to satisfy the requirement to obtain 10% of initiative signatures from volunteers, by using their paid members and employees to gather signatures, so long as they are not paid "*for the specific purpose of soliciting signatures.*" Thus, those groups would not have to gather any signatures with volunteer labor. It is blatantly unfair and discriminatory to establish a difficult hurdle to overcome in the initiative process and then to carve out unions and non-profit organizations from this requirement.

Finally, this bill would violate the constitutional right to Free Speech and Equal

Protection by making it much more difficult for some reformers and not others to gather the signatures needed to qualify an initiative.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your veto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Grove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Shannon Grove
Senate Republican Leader