



August 29, 2024

VIA Email to the Office of the Governor and Author

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

RE: AB 2655 (Berman) – Defending Democracy from Deepfake Deception Act of 2024 – REQUEST FOR GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

The League of Women Voters of California writes to request your signature on AB 2655 (Berman), which introduces crucial tools to fight against the digital manipulation of truth in our elections. Technology has progressed to the state where it does not take a lot of effort to create audiovisual material that seems real in both sight and sound yet is completely fake. This has the ability to damage our elections by targeting candidates, elected officials, or the voting process itself, undermining trust in the electoral process.

AB 2655 directs large online platforms to use the best available tools to remove posted material within 3 days of complaint if the platforms know or act with reckless regards that the material contains digitally altered or created media which portray Californian candidates for state or federal office, electeds, and elections officials in a false but believable way that influences a statewide election. This requirement is narrowly tailored to apply to the 120 days preceding

a statewide election or 120 days before and 60 days after if content is related to persons charged with conducting the election. The bill also directs online platforms to label on complaint any other materially deceptive content related to elections as being false for the half-year before an election or the half-year before and 60 days after an election if the content relates to the election process. Exceptions are granted to news periodicals and broadcasting stations as long as they provide a clear disclaimer or are otherwise provided for under federal law.

Online disinformation and the emergence of deepfake technology present critical threats to the integrity of democratic elections. Disinformation—false information spread deliberately to deceive—distorts public discourse and undermines the electorate's ability to make informed decisions. Deepfakes, which employ sophisticated artificial intelligence to create realistic but entirely fabricated audiovisual content, can falsely portray public figures in damaging ways, thereby influencing public opinion under false pretenses. These technologies can rapidly spread through social media, reaching vast audiences before corrections and fact-checks can be implemented, thereby magnifying their impact on elections.

The dangers posed by such technologies threaten the very foundation of democratic society. They erode trust in electoral processes and media outlets, diminish the quality of public discourse, and can lead to increased polarization among the electorate. This polarization makes constructive political dialogue difficult, as fabricated content often plays on emotional triggers rather than factual accuracy, deepening divides, and entrenching partisanship.

Assemblymember Marc Berman
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**For these reasons, The League of Women Voters of California strongly supports
AB 2655 (Berman) and requests your signature. Thank you.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephanie Doute". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephanie Doute
Executive Director