



July 23, 2024

**VIA Online Portal to Author and Senate Committee on Appropriations**

The Honorable Alex Lee  
California State Assembly  
1021 O St. Ste. 6330  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

**RE: AB 270 (Lee) Political Reform Act of 1974: public campaign financing — CO-SPONSOR and SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Lee,

**The League of Women Voters of California writes to co-sponsor and support AB 270, which would place the California Fair Elections Act on the November 2026 ballot to repeal the ban on public financing of campaigns.** The ban was put into place by Proposition 73 in 1988 and impacts all California jurisdictions other than charter cities. If passed, the measure would restore local control and offer new options to strengthen the accountability of elections through innovative, voluntary citizen campaign financing at the local and state level.

Money presents one of the greatest threats to representative democracy today. It distorts incentives, makes the competition among candidates inequitable, and drowns out the voices of ordinary voters. Public financing of election campaigns reduces the influence of special interests, increases the power of small donors and ordinary voters, enables candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and diminishes barriers to entry – thereby diversifying the candidate pool.

Five charter cities (Berkeley, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Francisco) have successful public financing systems in place. And voter support for such systems has been very strong – 75% of voters voted for Los Angeles' Measure H in 2011, 65% voted for Berkeley's Measure X1 in 2016, and 74% voted for Oakland's Measure W in 2022.

Under AB 270, the California Fair Elections Act, public funds used for campaign financing would be required to come from a dedicated fund that must be available to all qualified, voluntarily participating candidates for the same office

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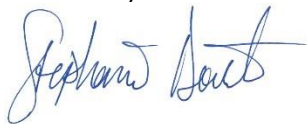
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without regard to incumbency or political party preference. The measure requires that candidates for funding abide by expenditure limits and meet strict qualification criteria, such as receiving small dollar contributions or vouchers from a specified number of adult residents. The Act would further ensure that no public funds earmarked for education, transportation, or public safety are eligible to fund public financing and bar the use of public funds to pay for legal defense, fines, or repayments of personal loans to candidates' campaigns.

In 2016, the League of Women Voters of California [supported SB 1107 \(Allen\)](#), which would have removed the ban on public financing of campaigns. While the bill passed with a bipartisan supermajority of the legislature, and was signed into law, the courts ruled the question must be put before the voters. AB 270, the California Fair Elections Act, will allow voters to restore control to local governments and the state by placing a measure on the ballot to repeal the ban on campaign public financing.

**The League of Women Voters of California stands as a co-sponsor and in strong support of AB 270.** Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Doute  
Executive Director