

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM PROCESS REFORM

WHEREAS, the ballot measure was originally enacted to give the average voter in California a way to band together with like-minded citizens and get action on issues that were not being addressed by the Legislature, but now the ballot measure is increasingly being used by large corporations, big money groups and large lobbying interests as a way to circumvent the Legislature and to mislead the voter into passing their agenda; and

WHEREAS, the average Californian is now being asked to make judgments and vote on measures that are confusing and complicated, that few can understand, that do not state who is funding them, and are supported through ads and mailers with false or misleading information, thus making it difficult to make an informed decision on how to vote, resulting in only 9% of Californians being very satisfied with the process and a majority wanting changes to the process*; and

WHEREAS, Democrats support an open and transparent system of governance giving the voter the means to make informed decisions, and three reforms to the ballot measure process would ensure transparency, properly inform the voter, and make the system accountable by creating a citizens oversight board, improving the funding disclosures and developing a system to mitigate problems; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Valley Grassroots for Democracy urges our elected officials to make three reforms to the ballot measure process: 1) create a citizen's oversight board (based on the Oregon model) where citizens will hold hearings and write the ballot summaries in plain language the voter can understand, 2) expand the funder disclosures to include top funders on the signature gathering sheets; and on all voting information material (which includes the citizen's oversight board description), and require that top funders must be announced out loud in all radio and television ads, and 3) develop a system for hearings to find flaws, potential legal challenges and propose compromise; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to Governor Gavin Newsom, State Attorney General Xavier Becerra, Secretary of State Alex Padilla, Speaker Anthony Rendon, President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins, Assembly Members; Adrin Nazarian, Jesse Gabriel, Luz Rivas, Laura Friedman, Christy Smith, Jacqui Irwin, Richard Bloom, State Senators; Bob Hertzberg, Anthony Portantino, Henry Stern, and Ben Allen

Written by Adrienne Burk, Past President, Valley Grassroots for Democracy
Cindy Kalman, President, Valley Grassroots for Democracy

*Public Policy Institute: Reforming California's Initiative Process