



AB 20 CORPORATE-FREE ELECTIONS ACT

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ALEX LEE

THIS BILL

Assembly Bill 20, the “Corporate-Free Elections Act,” will conform state law with federal law by prohibiting business entities and corporations from directly contributing to any candidate for elective office in California.

PROBLEM

This bill aims to rectify the undue influence that corporations have had in our democracy since *Citizens United*. With deepening income inequality and wealthy people afforded more political influence, it is imperative we commit to our values that every person has an equal voice in the political process by addressing its systemic inequities.

Each year, business entities contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to campaigns across California, with over \$785 million spent on the 2020 election in California alone. Current campaign finance laws allow for great potential to manipulate the interests and priorities of elected officials and candidates, such that they do not align with the will of their constituents or the people of California.

Corporate special interest money erodes public trust in our elected officials, putting into question their priorities – particularly during unprecedented times of crisis. The Constitution guarantees a representative democracy for the people, not corporate executives and the rich.

BACKGROUND

This bill aims to restore the public’s faith in democracy and address the systemic and perceived influence of corporate special interests.

The Corporate-Free Elections Act is not a radical idea – 22 States and the Federal government have successfully enacted similar measures that prohibit corporations from directly financing a candidate’s election for public office. Corporate interests often prioritize policies around business profit over the well-being of everyday people.

For example, ExxonMobil [says](#) it is “committed to being part of the solution” to the climate crisis and [claims](#) to support a carbon tax. However, ExxonMobil [gave](#) more than \$37 million to climate science denying organizations since 1998 and continues to fund political action committees in support of lawmakers who oppose a carbon tax. Forty percent of the nearly \$1 million it had contributed to congressional incumbent campaigns during the 2020 election cycle went to 115 of the 150 climate science deniers seeking re-election.

SOLUTION

To address the systemic inequities in our electoral process, the Corporate-Free Elections Act will eradicate corporate influence by prohibiting business entities from contributing directly to any candidate for elective office.

SUPPORT

MOVI, Money Out Voters In (Sponsor)
ACCE Action (Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment)
Acterra
Alameda County Democratic Party
American Family Voices
California League of Conservation Voters
Community Democracy Project
Congressmember Ro Khanna
Courage California
Free Speech For People
Los Angeles County Democratic Party
Mi Familia Vota
Physicians for National Healthcare Policy, California
Progressive Asian Network for Action (PANA)
Sierra Club California
Students for a National Health Program (SNaHP)
Sunrise Movement Silicon Valley
Surfrider Foundation

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