

Years of Reform

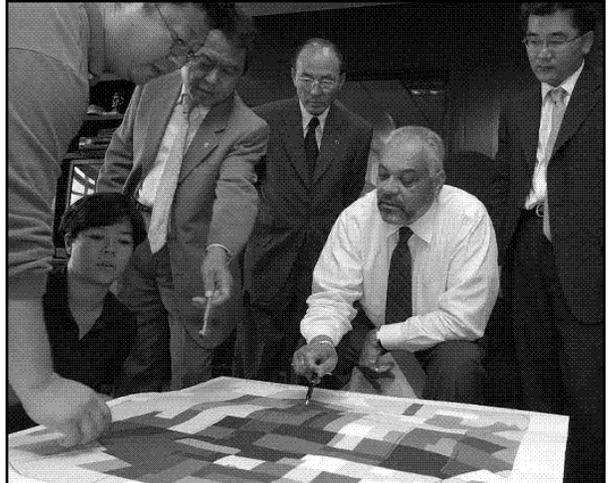
The campaign spending blitz and political ethics lapses of the past six months have kept California Common Cause (CCC) working hard. We have been active across the state, stepping in to hold government accountable to the people. Whether pressuring Governor Schwarzenegger to terminate his conflict-of-interest ridden \$8 million contract with Muscle & Fitness and Flex magazines, exposing new campaign tricks that hide the true source of political contributions, or pushing for the resignation of corrupt San Diego congressman "Duke" Cunningham, CCC played a major role in advancing a statewide agenda promoting ethics in government.

In the last few months, CCC members testified in support of public financing of elections in San Francisco, a tougher lobbyist ordinance in San Diego and Instant Run-Off Voting statewide.

CCC was also active in the November special election. Hundreds of people attended our Los Angeles forums exploring the propositions on the ballot. CCC staff was featured in dozens of newspaper, radio and television reports drawing attention to disingenuous campaign tactics and deploring the unparalleled \$250 million spent selling the propositions to the voters. To help the public and the media better understand who was supporting which propositions, CCC created a website tool, called "Pay-dar" to track the true source of campaign contributions to and from 30 different campaign committees.

Heading into 2006, campaign finance reform looms high on our list of priorities.

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Executive Director Kathay Feng (2nd from left) participates in past redistricting discussions.

Redistricting Efforts

With the special election behind us, we can get back to the business of pushing for real redistricting reform. Regardless of how people voted on Proposition 77, Californians expressed in poll after poll that they care about creating a redistricting process that is transparent and broadly representative. Every major Californian newspaper echoed that sentiment by calling for an open, fair process of drawing district lines by an independent commission.

The good news is that legislative leaders and the Governor have pledged to follow through to offer a proposal to the people. The better news is that they are on speaking terms again.

Just after the elections, California Common Cause (CCC) led a meeting of interested organizations to talk about the creation of a redistricting

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-Reform, from page 1

We will continue to support Clean Money publicly-financed elections for the state legislature and public-finance movements in various cities across California. In the Legislature, we are working with elected officials to close an especially egregious campaign disclosure loophole that was exploited in the special election -- by funneling their campaign contributions through certain types of committees, individuals and corporations were able to anonymously spend millions of dollars to influence the voters. In addition, we will renew our push for a non-partisan Secretary of State and remain focused on equal voting rights and access for all Californians.

CCC is co-hosting a Voting Rights Act Conference in February in Los Angeles along with the National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, League of Women Voters, ACLU, MALDEF and others. We hope you will join us as we address the reauthorization of important provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Thank you to all of our members who helped make 2005 a productive and exciting year for California Common Cause. With your support, the upcoming year will be a real year of reform.

-Redistricting, from page 1

commission, including AARP, Asian Americans for Civil Rights & Equality, California Clean Money Campaign, California Common Cause, California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, CALPIRG, Center for Governmental Studies, FairVote, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, League of Women Voters of California, Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, People for the American Way, Rose Institute, and State Building Trades Council / AFL-CIO.

The opposite column lists the redistricting principles our organizations agreed to support.

Redistricting Principles we support:

Authority for redistricting Congressional, state Senate, state Assembly, and Board of Equalization districts will be vested in a nonpartisan independent redistricting commission with membership that reflects the geographic and demographic diversity of the state.

A preamble would state the aspiration and goals of the Independent Redistricting Commission, including respect for the Voting Rights Act, creation of districts that reflect communities, and the creation of competitive districts.

Transparency of the process and a meaningful opportunity for interested parties and for the public to participate effectively must be ensured.

Redistricting will be conducted once each decade, following the census.

Redistricting criteria should be clearly articulated, and followed in order of priority. Each criterion will be followed to the extent practicable, consistent with the standards higher in priority. Nesting would be required.

- Districts with equal population
- Compliance with the Voting Rights Act
- Districts will be contiguous (connected at all points)
- Respect communities of interest and for city and county boundaries
- Use undivided census tracts and visible geographic features
- Geographic compactness (this criterion is open to further discussion).

Conflicts of interest should be eliminated for both the selection panel and the ultimate Independent Redistricting Commission. Ineligible individuals would include:

- All current or past Congressional members, state Board of Equalization members, state senators, and state assembly members
- All current local electeds, and past local electeds who have served in the last 10 years
- Lobbyists
- Employees, consultants, and relatives of ineligible electeds
- Public officials who have been convicted of any election or campaign violations, or felonies
- Additionally, restrictions would be placed on Commissioners running in any of the districts they create.

The redistricting map will be approved by a vote of a super-majority of the Independent Redistricting Commission, and will not require a vote of the people to confirm the adopted plan. The state Supreme Court will have immediate and exclusive jurisdiction in any challenge to an adopted map. The map will be treated as a law subject to referendum.

Thank you to all our CCC members who have mailed in postcards to lawmakers calling for redistricting reform!

Legislative Update

Bills supported by CA Common Cause

AB 583 (Hancock) CA Clean Money Act

This bill would create a voluntary system of full public financing for all statewide races. Authorizes eligible candidates - those who demonstrate a broad base of support and refuse other contributions - to obtain public funds to fund their campaigns. *This bill has collected several new co-authors since last session. The bill is scheduled to be heard on January 10.*

New bills CA Common Cause is following:

SCA 17 (Speier) State officers. Outside income

This bill would prohibit constitutional officers (Gov., Lt. Gov., Treasurer, Attorney General...) from receiving outside earned-income other than their state salary. *This bill is awaiting assignment to a policy committee.*

SB 472 (Alquist) Disclosure of income

This bill would require greater precision in the income that politicians report on their annual Statements of Economic Interest. *This bill is awaiting assignment to a policy committee.*

AB 1391 (Leno) Use of campaign funds

This bill would prohibit campaign funds from being used to rent, lease or purchase property in which a candidate has more than a 10% interest. *This bill is awaiting assignment to a policy committee.*

CCC thanks **Rebecca Avila** for her leadership as Chair of the California Board—luckily she will continue serving on the board!

We welcome **Ric Bainter** as the new 2006 Chair!!

New Board Member: Thad Kousser

California Common Cause is excited to welcome our newest board member, Professor Thad Kousser. Thad is an assistant political science professor at the University of California, San Diego. His research is focused on legislative politics, policymaking, and election reform. His publications include work on the initiative process, term limits, reapportionment, campaign finance laws, the blanket primary, health care policy, and European Parliament elections. His book, *Term Limits and the Dismantling of State Legislative Professionalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) won the APSA Legislative Studies Section's Alan Rosenthal Prize.

This past election season, Kousser assisted our San Diego activists in organizing two successful mayoral debates. Thad believes it is important to focus on process and not just policy because oftentimes "the rules of the game determine who wins."

CA COMMON CAUSE Board of Directors Richard Bainter (Chair)

Rebecca Avila Bonnie Barkett

Grant Davis-Denny Kris Greenlee

Joanne McKray Bradley Phillips

Peter S. Reinke Fred Ridel

Paul H. Turner John Ulin

Roy Ulrich Thad Kousser



**Corrupt San Diego
Congressman Resigns**

Randy "Duke" Cunningham recently resigned from U.S. Congress after pleading guilty to conspiracy and tax charges.

The eight-term San Diegan Congressman admitted to taking \$2.4 million in bribes in exchange for using his influence to help several defense contractors get business between 2000 and June 2005. The bribes were paid to him through a variety of methods including checks totaling over \$1 million, cash, rugs, furniture, yacht club fees, and vacations. He also admitted to filing a 2004 tax return claiming an income of \$121,079 when his actual gross for that year was \$1.2 million.

Common Cause followed Cunningham's case since the summer and launched a campaign urging Cunningham to step down. We would like to thank the several thousand CC members who signed our petition and kept the heat on Cunningham!

Holding the powerful accountable is impossible without the participation of concerned citizens. Your action does make a difference!



Congressman Randy Cunningham tears up at the press conference announcing his resignation.

Among the "Duke's" remarks, "the truth is – I broke the law, concealed my conduct, and disgraced my high office...I would like to plead guilty and begin serving my prison term."

**Internal Affairs
*Perspectives from
an Intern***

*Shannon Prior, Sociology
Major & Political Science
Minor, Cal. State LA*



In my pursuit of a bachelor's degree in sociology, I have become acquainted with many of the problems that face our society. With so many issues in need of attention, it was difficult for me to decide where to focus my time and effort.

Every time I examined the issues that were important to me, like animal rights or media reform, I was discouraged by the obstacles to change. It was apparent to me that any significant reform proposed in these areas would be effectively blocked by the lobby of the industries affected. I realized that the change I wished to see in society was dependent upon the presence of an open and accountable government.

After this realization, California Common Cause was naturally the ideal place for me to intern. Since I have been here, I have helped in tasks from the mundane to the exciting. I have folded newsletters, attended meetings on voter empowerment, updated media lists, and helped organize three Los Angeles forums on the Special Election propositions.

I'm currently participating in the Los Angeles Media Reform Group and its mission to make Los Angeles' network television stations give back to the community in exchange for the free use of our public airwaves.

Throughout my experience at CCC I have been inspired by the energy, dedication, and effectiveness of the staff and the members. I am looking forward to staying active in this great organization.

**Email California Common Cause at
ca-info@commoncause.org**

California Common Cause Around the State



Los Angeles Proposition Forums

CCC teamed up with the Los Angeles League of Women Voters to hold three proposition forums. The University of Southern California, Loyola Marymount University and the University of California Los Angeles - hosted the forums. Hundreds of members, activists and students attended the forums listen to balanced discussions on all eight propositions.

Member Proposition Viewings

Members from San Diego to Point Reyes hosted more than 30 proposition viewings featuring our LMU proposition forum DVD. The viewings convened neighbors, softball teams, work groups, students and residents of a senior housing unit. CCC applauds all the viewing hosts & hostesses! We will take all your comments and step up our voter education efforts for 2006!

Members' Legislative Action

1,300 CCC members recently sent post cards Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez to voice their support for these reforms:

- Clean Money publicly-funded election in California
- an independent redistricting commission reflective of all Californians
- a non-partisan Secretary of State

Please contact the Sacramento office if there are specific bills you think we should support.



Media and members of the public at one of the Los Angeles proposition forums.

California Common Cause sponsored three proposition forums with the League of Women Voters ahead of the November 2005 special election.

This forum, held at USC, drew a full house on October 17th.

Open Government in San Diego

2005 was a year of corruption and scandals in San Diego. In 2006, CCC is committed to leading efforts in San Diego to strengthen ethics and lobbying laws. CCC members Simon Mayeski and Tito Zevallos recently testified before the San Diego Ethics Commission in support of tougher lobbyist regulations.

Join us Saturday, Jan. 21st to learn how to involved with our efforts in San Diego. The meeting will feature a presentation by Stacey Fulhorst, Executive Director of the SD Ethics Commission. Point Loma Library, 3701 Voltaire Street from 12 - 2 pm. For more information, please contact Amy Temple at (213) 252.4552 or atemple@commoncause.org.

Voter-Owned Elections in San Francisco

On December 19th, the five commissioners of the San Francisco Ethics Commission unanimously approved a bill to bring partial public-financing to mayoral campaigns. The bill now goes to a vote of the Board of Supervisors. CCC has been working with *San Franciscans For Voter Owned Elections* to support this measure. *Check out www.voterownedelections.org for more information.*

Sacramento Media Group

The Sacramento Media Group provided feedback to city council members as they negotiate a contract to provide WiFi for Sacramento. WiFi will provide Internet access through radio transmitters and can be accessed by laptop computer users on the go or by stationary computers. Members of the group convened nonprofit organizations to advise the city council on ways to use WiFi to provide Internet access in innovative ways. The group is planning a forum on media issues and continuing to monitor coverage of issues on local television. We also provide feedback on balanced reporting on local radio stations. To join the group, contact CCC staffer JoAnn Fuller at the Sacramento office.

Los Angeles Media Group

CCC recently expanded our media reform efforts to Los Angeles and formed a LA Media Reform Group. The group has been active in calling for a more accountable media. In January, the group will be meeting with T.V. station managers in LA to discuss election coverage and urge station managers to use our public airwaves to provide intelligent coverage of election issues. To learn more or to join the group, please contact Amy Temple at (213) 252.4552 or atemple@commoncause.org.



A packed room of 400 San Diegans attended CCC's mayoral debate between Donna Frye and Jerry Sanders at UCSD. The theme of open and accessible government lined the debate.

Upcoming events**California Voting Rights Act Conference, February 4, 2006**

2005 the 40th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). We have made some amazing progress since the VRA was enacted. The law helped eliminate poll taxes and literacy tests and much of the physical violence that kept minorities from being able to cast a ballot.

But even today, significant barriers exist. The 2000 elections made plainly clear that hundreds of African Americans and Latinos were turned away in Florida and other states. The 2004 elections saw longer lines and fewer voter resources allocated to many minority neighborhoods, and we are still fighting modern day poll taxes that come in the form of onerous voter ID requirements. California Common Cause found that the punch card voting equipment that most voters in California were voting on in 2000 were subject to high error rates and had a disparate impact on voting in minority communities. Monitors throughout California still find discriminatory behavior by pollworkers who turn away voters with language assistance needs. The need for the Voting Rights Act to be enforced continues to be great.

That is why California Common Cause is helping to lead the way to push for reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. Certain important sections that protect minority communities' ability to vote, that require bilingual voter assistance, and that require Department of Justice election monitors, are scheduled to expire in 2007 unless Congress votes to renew them.

Want to take action? Write your Congress member to tell them you support the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act!

Interested in learning more? You can attend our free conference on February 4th in Los Angeles. It will be held at USC Davidson Conference Center, 3415 South Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90089. For details, visit www.calvec.org or call toll free 1(866) 952-4222. The all-day conference will feature a Voting Rights primer, discussion about how the VRA has had an impact in California today, and skills workshops on communicating about the VRA with the media, organizing a community forum, and organizing a Congressional visit.

Sunshine Week

Sunshine Week is a national effort spearheaded by journalist groups to raise public awareness of the alarming amount of public information that is being kept secret from citizens and stress the importance of open government. This year's Sunshine Week will be held March 12-18, 2006. If you are interested in hosting local Sunshine Week efforts in your neighborhood, contact Amy Temple at (213) 252.4552 or atemple@commoncause.org.



Want to hear more about what Common Cause is doing in California?

Sign up for CauseNet and get the most up to date information on Common Cause campaigns. Visit www.commoncause.org. Fill out the "E-Mail Updates" Box (on the right side of the page) After you fill out the "Sign Up for CauseNet" page, you're ready to go!

Improving Voter Accessibility in California

The California Voter Empowerment Circle (CalVEC) recently launched a website. Established in February 2003 by Kathay Feng, CalVEC is an ad hoc coalition of organizations committed to encouraging full civic participation in traditionally disenfranchised communities, particularly, people of color, people with disabilities, and language minorities. CalVEC has been involved in shaping election administration policy, improving DMV voter registration, supporting voting machines that open access to more voters; providing a forum for discussion about California's redistricting process and criteria; and protecting the Voting Rights Act.

The coalitions is supported by over 30

"Common Cause is a national network of active citizens who fight to ensure that powerful institutions in society - including government, corporations, and the news media - serve the public interest, not narrow special interests."

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organizations including CCC, the League of Women Voters, ACLU, NAACP-LDF, MALDEF, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Protection & Advocacy, the Center for Governmental Studies, California Clean Money Campaign, and People for the American Way.

The website is resource for groups involved with voter outreach. It also provides a forum for groups to share ideas and proposals for improving the electoral process.

The site was developed by CCC staff, with the help of a lot of input from coalition groups. We're always looking for more input, so check it out and tell us what you think!

Visit the site at www.calvec.org

California Common Cause staff	
Kathay Feng	Executive Director
JoAnn Fuller	Associate Director
Amy Temple	Lead Organizer
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