

Statement of California Common Cause
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(via phone to the Conference Committee on Redistricting and Term Limits Reform)

First, I would like to thank the Conference Committee for setting up these hearings for the public to provide input on two very important governance reforms – redistricting and term limits.

I am sorry I cannot be there in person today. As many of you may know, I am now 8 months pregnant and under doctor's orders not to travel.

Let me say at the outset... California Common Cause supports redistricting reform that creates a citizens' commission to follow strict mapping and hearing guidelines. We also support term limit reforms that will give legislators more time to develop more familiarity let alone expertise with the wide range of issues that a state as large and diverse as California must deal with. It is also important that legislators have more time to develop relationships and an understanding of the rules and procedures necessary to push important policy initiatives through.

That said, we urge this conference committee to keep the two reform proposals separate.

Redistricting reform should be addressed through SCA 3. We've had 6 hearings, dozens of meetings, and conferred with a broad range of organizations to refine SCA 3's language to a point where it is a very strong bill.

SCA 3 addresses the need for diverse representation on the commission by having 11 citizen members who must represent our state's gender, racial, and geographic diversity. The selection process gives the legislature a limited role in striking and picking the nominees, while putting in place several safeguards to ensure its independence. It sets up clear guidelines for mapping that put the Constitution's equal population requirements, the Voting Rights Act, and respect for communities of interest and cities at the top of the list. And it creates a strong framework for public input that keeps the process truly open and transparent. SCA 3 is ready for a full floor vote in the Senate and Assembly. An overwhelming majority of voters are also ready for redistricting reform and should be given the chance to vote on a strong redistricting reform initiative this November.

Our current term limits should also be addressed - through separate legislation. It is clear that term limits have had some benefits – without them, we would not have the diversity of today's legislature where we have many more women and more minority representatives.

At the same time, requiring Assembly members to run for office every two years, and allowing them to serve for only a total possible six years has created a situation where members are constantly campaigning and have little time to get up to speed on the broad

scope of issues they have to deal with before they must move on. Our legislators are forced to become more reliant on special interest lobbyists who often have more expertise and tenure. The nexus between the constant campaign fundraising and the dependence on lobbyist expertise has created an untenable situation resulting in dysfunction at best, and at worst, corruption.

With only six years in office, leadership must be chosen long before people have fully developed their relationships and experience. Long term policy development is difficult without the trust to break through the gridlock and the time to overcome a steep learning curve. The system makes it difficult for even the best of our legislators to craft and pass good policy.

The situation is only a little better on the Senate side where our Senators have four years before having to run for election, but can still only stay two terms for a total of 8 years.

We think that our current term limit requirements need to be changed to give legislators greater time to be policy makers instead of politicians. We support a bill that deals directly with term limits reform and does not attempt to dilute or dismember the redistricting reforms proposed in SCA 3.