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## [Jerry Brown tax campaign looks to legislative staff for help](#)

It's all hands on deck as the deadline approaches for supporters of Gov. **Jerry Brown's** tax measure to turn in the hundreds of thousands of signatures they need to qualify for the November ballot.

In addition to calling and mailing voters pleas to send signatures in, campaign supporters have asked some Democratic staff members in the Legislature to circulate petitions for the constitutional amendment on their time off.

The [volunteer effort](#) is organized by the political, non-state arms of the Assembly and Senate Democratic caucuses, which are funded and staffed by the [California Democratic Party](#), both the Assembly and [Senate Democrats](#) say.

"As has become routine and commonplace during election season, several legislative staffers - on their own time and of their own volition - are helping to gather signatures for the Governor's education measure - and the Senate Democrats are encouraging that in every appropriate way," Jason Kinney, a spokesman for Senate Democrats, wrote in an email. Kinney said the "lion's share" of petitions were distributed out of the Senate Democrats' political office, which is across the street from the Capitol.

Robin Swanson, a spokeswoman for Assembly Speaker **John. A. Pérez**, said staff interested in helping collect signatures are "highly encouraged to do so, of course on their free time and outside the building."

"But I think that people are willing to do that because they know that the alternative is not a good one," she said.

Both Swanson and Alicia Trost, spokeswoman for Senate President Pro Tem **Darrell Steinberg**, said the distribution is not being handled inside the Capitol or on state time, which could violate laws restricting the use of [taxpayer funds](#) for political activities.

Legislative staff from both parties are routinely asked to volunteer for the campaigns of members in the caucus. Phillip Ung of **California Common Cause** said he worries the practice "starts to blur the line between what is appropriate and what isn't appropriate" in separating campaign and state work. He said he was approached by one legislative aide who felt pressured after receiving the petition from the office's chief of staff.

"Even though its voluntary, or they're saying it's voluntary, doesn't mean that staff don't feel pressured to feel they should do this for the sake of the party or for the sake of their

political career," he said, noting that some staff worry their campaign activities are tracked by the caucus leadership.

Supporters of Brown's measure, which includes a temporary [sales tax increase](#) and income tax hike for those earning more than \$250,000 a year, are aiming to turn in the more than 800,000 valid voter signatures needed to secure a spot on the ballot by mid May.

*The Bee's Jim Sanders contributed to this report.*