



Our Voting Rights Act Conf. drew attendees from all over the state.

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Clean Money Hits Bump in the Road

Public-finance measure stalls in state Senate; CA Nurses Clean Money Initiative turns in signatures

The California Clean Money bill takes a lickin', but keeps on tickin'! After several hearings where the Senate Elections Committee put off the vote, we can at least say that your advocacy has kept the Clean Money bill on life support. Thousands of California Common Cause members joined Cal. Clean Money Campaign, League of Women Voters, Sierra Club, MALDEF, MoveOn.org and many other organizations to register our strong support for the California Clean Money and Fair Elections Act of 2006. Our members responded to several calls to action with thousands of postcards, phone calls, e-mails and faxes.



Assemblymember Loni Hancock, author of the CA Clean Money Act, explains some of the details of her bill at an East Bay forum for California Common Cause.

The bill, AB 583, authored by Assembly member Loni Hancock, would create a voluntary system of publicly-financed elections for legislative and statewide offices, and give Californians a louder voice in Sacramento by making elections about people and ideas, not big donors. It would open the doors to a greater diversity of candidates by leveling the campaign playing field.

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Redistricting reform has support of California's voters

Poll commissioned by CA Common Cause reveals support for independent commission

CCC has long supported redistricting reform. We support an independent commission to take this process out of the smoky back rooms of a few power-brokers and bring it into the light of public scrutiny. We want to ensure that new

district lines are drawn to respect neighborhoods and cities, not just incumbents' political interests. But what do Californians say, especially after the resounding defeat of Prop. 77?

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We put together a poll with the League of Women Voters of California and the Rose Institute to find out.

- 66% of California voters support creating an INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION to draw district lines instead of incumbent legislators.
- Even among those who voted against Prop. 77, 53% prefer an independent redistricting commission.
- 86% want an open process and an end to back room deals in redistricting.
- 78 - 81% want a redistricting process that keeps their neighborhoods and cities together and divided as little as possible.
- 75% want the Legislature to have only indirect involvement in selecting the independent redistricting commission.

These results confirm that this is an important issue to all California voters because people are tired of politics as usual. For more on our poll of 800 likely voters, visit www.commoncause.org/ca.

On a related front, SCA 3, the redistricting reform bill authored by Senator Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach) and Senator Roy Ashburn (R-Bakersfield), is moving steadily through the Senate. Your postcards have helped keep the momentum going, despite fierce resistance from some senators. The bill creates a balanced and diverse independent redistricting commission to draw lines once a decade according to clear mapping criteria and public input.

Through our coalition building efforts, the following legislators have signed on as co-

authors of the bill: Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), Sen. Elaine Alquist (D-Santa Clara), Sen. Christine Kehoe (D-San Diego), Sen. Nell Soto (D-Pomona), Asm. Joe Canciamilla (D-Pittsburg), Asm. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco), Asm. Joe Nation (D-San Rafael), and Asm. Lois Wolk (D-Davis). If you are a constituent, be sure to thank these brave souls!

We still need you to keep the pressure on!

- Call Senator Perata. One of the things some Senators would like to take out of SCA 3 is the language of the bill prohibiting consideration of incumbent addresses when drawing the maps. You can guess why! Leave a message with Senate President Pro tem Perata at (916) 445-6577 / (510) 286-1333 and tell him that “independent means independent!” The commission should not consider incumbent or candidate addresses when drawing lines.
- Work with your local city council to pass a resolution calling on state lawmakers to support redistricting reform that will respect neighborhoods and cities over incumbent political interests. To get a copy of our sample resolution, visit www.commoncause.org/ca or call (213) 252-4552.
- Write your own member of the state Legislature and tell him or her that you want them to co-author SCA 3.
- Approach other organizations that you are involved with to support SCA 3. We have fact sheets and support letters on the website.

We need all the help we can get – if we don’t get REAL redistricting reform done this year, we won’t have a chance like this for another decade.

Congress introduces legislation to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act

You would think that the Voting Rights Act (VRA) would be enshrined in our Constitution as an inalienable right. In fact, there are several provisions of the VRA that will expire in 2007 if they are not renewed by Congress.

The good news is that many Republicans and most Democrats have joined forces to introduce companion bills in both houses. The bills are numbered H.R. 9 on the House side and S. 2703 on the Senate side and are called “The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006.”

The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization Act would renew the provisions of the VRA that:

- Require certain states and counties with a history of voting discrimination to get federal approval before changing their election laws and procedures (Section 5);

- Guarantee that citizens who are not fluent in English are not denied access to voting and receive the language assistance they need to cast an informed ballot (Sections 203 and 4(f)4); and

- Give the U.S. Attorney General the power to send federal observers to monitor elections, and to deter and document discriminatory conduct (Sections 6-9).

Even though the bill has bi-partisan support, 56 members of Congress have already signed a letter to oppose the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act! Six of the signers hail from California – Gary Miller (Diamond Bar), Ed Royce (Fullerton), Dana Rohrabacher (Huntington Beach), Ken Calvert (Corona), John Doolittle (Roseville), and John Campbell (Irvine).

California Common Cause urges members to tell these legislators not to turn back the clock on civil rights and voter access. Our democracy depends on full citizen participation in voting. For the text of the bill, sample letters, a list of your congressional member’s contact information, and other materials, visit www.commoncause.org/ca

Media Reform Heats Up in Congress, the State and Locally

New advances in technology are changing how ideas are communicated in our society. Congress will be voting on how to regulate access to the internet which could encourage or stifle democratic debate.

Equal access is paramount. For example, the internet can bring opportunities to connect with other people, share ideas and participate in our democracy online. We

want as many citizens as possible to participate in our democracy in as many ways as possible, including high-tech activism through the internet.

In California, these ideals led California Common Cause to urge amendments to AB 2987, the “cable competition bill.”

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Media Reform

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Television commercials have touted this bill as bringing competition to the cable industry by allowing AT&T and other telecommunications corporations to provide a bundle of services (including telephone, additional television channels and movies, and internet service) by obtaining a statewide franchise instead of negotiating with local governments. While virtually everyone likes the idea of competition, this bill has some glaring problems.

The three specific areas of our concern with AB 2987 are:

Unequal Access: AT&T has already said they don't expect to offer rural or middle- and low- income communities access to high speed internet and other services. They argue that offering lower speeds and fewer services, as permitted by AB 2987, are good enough for these communities.

Redlining: While AT&T and other carriers can't discriminate within their service area, under AB 2987, they define their service area. Instead of designating the area in which they offer telephone service as their service area, the telecoms can draw new specific service areas around certain neighborhoods, excluding low income and rural communities.

Access channel support: Public, educational, and government (PEG) access channels offer communities the opportunity to observe city council and other local government meetings and to produce their own television programs. AB 2987 allows lower funding to PEG channels. *AB 2987 is currently awaiting a*

hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Los Angeles: Members of the LA Media Group have begun an ambitious monitoring project of local Los Angeles news broadcasts. Each commercial station is being watched and monitored for content and local relevance. The group completed two weeks of monitoring in



Members of the LA media reform group met with U.S. Representative Henry Waxman to discuss the renewal of the Telecommunication Act and media consolidation issues in Los Angeles. CCC was heartened by his support for more media diversity, net neutrality, and consumer protection.

March and April. Initial findings highlight the negative impact of cross ownership, when the same company owns various media sources –newspaper, radio, television- in the same area. In LA, three TV stations are owned by GE, two by Viacom and two by News Corp. and the Tribune Corporation owns the *Los Angeles Times* and KTLA Channel 5. *Monitoring data will be published this summer.*

Sacramento: Members of the Sacramento Media Reform Group recently helped almost 200 hundred members of the public send postcards to their local news outlets, asking for better coverage of elections issues.

Clean Money

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After passing through the state Assembly, AB 583 faced an uphill battle in the Senate. Only one of the members of the Senate Elections Committee, Sen. Bowen, supported the bill. Senators Battin (Palm Springs), Poochigian (Fresno), Murray (Los Angeles) and Romero (Los Angeles) trashed it.



CA Common Cause board member, Paul Turner, testifies in support of Clean Money at a committee hearing.

In preparation for a scheduled committee vote on May 17th, Common Cause members jammed Senate President pro Tem Don Perata's phone lines for two straight days urging him to get his reluctant Democrats to support the bill. Although Sen. Perata had expressed

support for the bill, he was not able to get the committee members on board. Sen. Murray might be moved, but Sen. Romero remains in strong opposition. She did not show up for the hearing, resulting in Asm. Hancock pulling the bill from vote.

After the cancelled hearing, 50 demonstrators gathered in front of Sen. Perata's office until he came out and addressed them. He explained that he would not commit leadership to pass AB 583 because it looked like the California Nurses Clean Money Initiative might qualify for the ballot. That initiative includes the Clean Money provisions of AB 583 and new limits on corporate donations to initiative and candidate campaigns. California and National Common Cause are looking closely at the CNA initiative to decide whether to support it.

Californians want Clean Money elections to control the influence of money in politics. California Common Cause will continue to fight for public-financing of elections in California.

California Common Cause sponsors lobbying reform bill

AB 2974, introduced by Assembly member Lois Wolk, would provide better disclosure of the money behind "Astroturf lobbying," the practice of hiring PR firms and creating shell organizations with misleading names to stimulate popular support for or opposition to bills being considered in the Legislature. Often such groups, with names like "Consumer Alliance for a Strong Economy" or "Californians Against Higher Insurance Rates" are secretly funded by industries

representing their own interests. That's why we call them "Astroturf groups," not real grassroots groups.

In April, AB 2974 passed its first committee vote with strong bipartisan support.

For more about this and other bills we are active on, visit www.commoncause.org/ca and click on the "legislation" link on the left-hand navigation menu.

Around the State



San Diego: Do you know what your government is doing? In March, more than 75 San Diego members and community activists turned out to discuss the trend of government secrecy and our rights as citizens to know what our government is doing. The meeting featured a panel of local journalists and San Diego city council member Donna Frye.



San Diego city council member Donna Frye participates in a Sunshine Week panel.

In May, San Diego members gathered to learn about the renewal of the Voting Rights Act. The meeting featured a panel of community experts including city attorney Mike Aguirre.

Upcoming events. Join us on July 22nd at the Mission Valley Library (2123 Fenton Parkway) to learn about new programs that are helping to shape the future of San Diego, including the new Elections Task Force and the Mayor's Office of Ethics and Integrity.

Help bring clean elections to San Diego! Visit www.sdcleanelections.org.

Los Angeles: The Los Angeles City Council is considering moving to a Clean Money system, where candidates who abide by certain rules will receive full public

Sign up for CAUSENETs

Keep up with all of these important issues!

A quick and easy way is to sign up for CauseNet, Common Cause's internet action alerts. These timely reminders make it easy to weigh in on important bills with just a click of your computer mouse. To sign up, go the www.commoncause.org and enter your email address under "E-mail Alerts" in the right column of the home page.

financing for mayoral and city council campaigns.

The Los Angeles Ethics Commission recently completed its report on the feasibility of such a system. Based on its report, the Ethics Commission will set up town hall forums around Los Angeles to discuss the various options.

California Common Cause will be co-sponsoring a series of town halls throughout Los Angeles. The first, May 9 in the San Fernando Valley, brought out over 100 community activists who learned about Clean Money programs and shared thoughts and concerns. See our website for future meetings.

East Bay: In April, Common Cause members and activists gathered at the Greenlining Institute to learn more about AB 583 and Oakland and Berkeley Instant Run-Off Voting efforts. The meeting featured Assembly member Loni Hancock, Trent Lange from CA Clean Money, board member Joanne McKray and Berkeley city councilmember Kris Worthington as speakers.

Please visit www.commoncause.org/ca to get involved with our activities around the state.

Your Legacy: Leaving a Bequest for California Common Cause

*Ambitious plans to reform our democracy.
Ambitious plans to engage all our citizenry.*

Is leaving a legacy important to you? You can ensure that the issues and causes you care about continue into the next generation by leaving a bequest to California Common Cause in your will.

Through your will, you can specify that some or all of your assets benefit California Common Cause. After your lifetime, the assets you specify will pass to California Common Cause and your estate could take a charitable deduction for the amount of your bequest.

There are many ways to leave a bequest to California Common Cause. If you already have a will, you can simply add a codicil specifying a gift in one of the following ways:

- You specify a fixed dollar amount or asset in your will for California Common Cause.



Members of the Raging Grannies hold up Common Cause signs to highlight the need for ethics and campaign finance reform.

- You name a percentage of your estate for California Common Cause. This allows the size of your gift to adjust to your financial circumstances.
- Once your family and friends are remembered and all your debts and taxes settled, California Common Cause receives all or a percentage of whatever remains in your estate.
- You name California Common Cause as a contingent beneficiary in case your primary beneficiaries predecease you.

The following language can be used to provide for California Common Cause in your will:

“I hereby bequeath _____ to California Common Cause, a non-profit association incorporated through Common Cause (headquartered in Washington DC) by the laws of California, and having its principal office at 1005 12th St. Suite C Sacramento, CA 95814.”

For more information on planned giving, please call board member Peter Reinke at (510) 531-8757.

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Who's buying our democracy?

- Westly has put \$27 million into his own campaign for governor.
- Schwarzenegger has received the maximum contribution of \$44,600 from nearly a hundred individuals.
- Angelides has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from one family.

Check the "Pay-Dar" radar for more information: www.commoncause.org/ca

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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