

## **SB 1107: Strengthen Election Accountability**

### **What is the problem?**

Voters are increasingly concerned about political mega-donors in our elections, and many governments are considering new approaches to campaign financing. Unfortunately, one of the most promising reforms is currently prohibited in most California jurisdictions.

Six charter cities (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Long Beach, Oakland, and Richmond) offer limited public funds to match small campaign donations. These laws amplify the voices of everyday Californians who donate small amounts and give candidates an alternative to relying on large donors.

But other jurisdictions cannot enact such laws today. Unlike charter cities, a provision of a 1988 initiative bans counties, districts, general law cities, or the state from offering public campaign funds.

### **How can we provide local options to address campaign finance?**

SB 1107 (Allen/Hancock) would remove the ban on voluntary public campaign financing programs. Because the ban was first enacted by ballot initiative, the bill would be referred for voters' approval.

SB 1107 *would not* create a public financing program or require any government to offer public financing. It would simply remove the ban and permit local governments or the state, if they so choose, to enact laws that create public financing programs. Local governments would have the flexibility to tailor policies to local concerns and conditions, with basic protections for fairness and accountability.

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### **What other reforms can strengthen accountability and public trust?**

SB 1107 also includes two other commonsense reforms to increase the accountability of our elections:

The bill would prohibit foreign corporations and governments from donating to state or local candidates. Such contributions are already prohibited to ballot measure committees.

Additionally, in the rare but serious cases that an elected official is convicted of a felony such as bribery or embezzlement and therefore banned from running for future office, SB 1107 would require the convicted official to return any unused campaign funds to donors or pay past debts, and forfeit any surplus funds after six months to the state's general fund. (Legal defense funds would not be affected.)