



[www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org)

June 23, 2015

The Honorable Evan Low  
State Capitol  
Room 2175  
Sacramento, CA 94249

Honorable Richard Bloom  
State Capitol  
Room 2003  
Sacramento, CA 94249

**RE: AB 1100 – Ballot Initiatives: Filing Fees – SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymembers Low and Bloom,

On behalf of California Common Cause and our members, I am writing with a letter of support for Assembly Bill 1100, which adjusts for inflation the filing fee to circulate initiative or referendum petitions from \$200 to \$2,500.

The present \$200 filing fee – set in 1943 – is far too low and has not kept track with inflation. A consequence of this is that numerous frivolous petitions are filed where the proponent never seriously intends to qualify the measure for the ballot. The “Sodomite Suppression Act” is a recent example of this abuse of the initiative process. According to the Attorney General, between 2009 and 2013 almost 315 petitions were filed, but only 27 (9%) actually qualified for the ballot. Frivolous petitions are also a tremendous waste of public funds, as the Attorney General is required to expend attorney staff time preparing a title and summary for each petition.

While the filing fee should be raised, it is equally important that the fee not be raised so high as to exclude all but the wealthy from making use of direct democracy. The original intent of the initiative process has always been to open the doors to truly people-powered efforts that often may not have significant funds at the outset to pay for filing fees. The Proposition 11 redistricting reform campaign offers an excellent example of this. When Common Cause, League of Women Voters, and AARP filed our initiative petition, we were operating on a shoe string budget. In fact, it was not until the petition was filed that our message started gaining traction and we were able to raise the funds necessary to hire signature gatherers. If the petition filing fee is made too high, it could discourage grassroots campaigns from even beginning.

AB 1100 is a reasonable balance between these competing interests. The \$2500 updates the filing fee for inflation since 1943, but is not so high as to shut out community or nonprofit groups that do not have deep pockets. As an added protection for truly grassroots advocates, we suggest amending the bill to allow the filing fee to be entirely waived if the proponent submits their language along with the signatures of 1,000 registered voters endorsing the proposal.

For all these reasons, California Common Cause strongly supports AB 1100, and we look forward to working with your office on this important legislation. We hope that you will look to our organization if you need any further assistance. Please contact me at [nheidorn@commoncause.org](mailto:nheidorn@commoncause.org) or (916) 520-4070 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicolas Heidorn" followed by a stylized flourish.

Nicolas Heidorn  
Policy and Legislative Counsel