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May 5, 2015

The Honorable Cristina Garcia
State Capitol, Room 5164
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 952 – Special Elections for Vacancies in Elective Office - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Garcia,

On behalf of California Common Cause and our members, I am writing with a letter of support for Assembly Bill 952, which promotes democratic accountability by requiring a special election to be called to fill a city council vacancy under certain circumstances.

Under current law, a city council may fill a vacant city council seat either by calling a special election or by directly appointing a successor to serve out the remainder of the former incumbent's term. AB 952 requires, if the vacancy occurs in the first half of the former incumbent's term of office (and at least 130 days prior to the next general municipal election), that the person appointed to fill the vacancy hold office only until the next general municipal election, at which point a special election will be held to fill the remainder of the unexpired term.

It is a fundamental democratic principle that citizens have the right to select their representatives; exceptions to this principle should be limited in nature. AB 952 sets a reasonable half-term limit (generally, less than 2 years) to the duration that an appointee can serve without having to stand for election. Moreover, requiring that the special election be held at the next general municipal election will usually result in higher voter participation, at less cost, than a stand-alone special election.

For all of these reasons, California Common Cause strongly supports AB 952 and we look forward to working with your office. We hope that you will look to our organization if you need any further assistance.

Please contact me at nheidorn@commoncause.org or (916) 520-4070 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Nicolas Heidorn
Policy and Legislative Counsel
California Common Cause