



BALLOT INITIATIVE TRANSPARENCY ACT



Californians agree: The state's initiative process needs improving. They want clarity, transparency, and fairness.

Collaboration and Diversity

Over the past year, more than 60 organizations shared ideas and opinions for changes that will lead to clearer initiatives, simpler ballots, and more information for California voters

A Broad Coalition of Sponsors:

- League of Women Voters of California
- California Common Cause
- California NAACP
- Think Long Committee for California
- California Church IMPACT
- California Forward

Voters Support Improvement:

- 83%** agree that initiative wording is too complicated and confusing
- 84%** favor increasing public disclosure of funding sources for signature gathering and initiative campaigns
- 77%** support a review and revision process to avoid legal issues and drafting errors
- 75%** favor giving initiative backers more time for volunteers to gather signatures

On all of these points – a majority of California Democrats, Independents, and Republicans agree

Source: Public Policy Institute of California Statewide Survey 2013

SB 1253: Three Steps to Improvement

SB 1253, authored by Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, is based on the work of a broad and diverse coalition and ideas backed by seven out of 10 Californians. It would:

1 Give voters more useful information about initiatives – and who backs them

Use the Secretary of State's website to give voters one-stop access to information about the individuals and groups behind each initiative, identify the top 10 donors and make the sources of funding clear and easy to find

2 Make sure ballot materials are voter-friendly

Voters continue to demand that ballot language be clear and concise. They want to understand what an initiative would do – or would not do.

The law would require ballot materials to be drafted in voter-friendly language – avoiding technical terms and unnecessary complication.

Ballot materials would clearly describe the type and amount of any new tax or fee being imposed or increased.

3 Create more opportunity for public and legislative feedback

- Opens the process for comment and improvement – Give voters an opportunity to comment on initiatives before they are circulated for signatures and lengthen time for volunteers to gather signatures

- Creating room for alternatives and compromises – Require the legislature to hold early hearings to review initiatives before they appear on the ballot

- Simplifying the ballot – Allow backers of an initiative to withdraw it after signatures are gathered but before ballots are printed