

# SB 636 – Ballot DISCLOSE Act

## SENATOR HENRY STERN

### **SUMMARY**

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SB 636, the Ballot DISCLOSE Act, will help voters make informed decisions when they vote on state ballot measures, by modifying the ballot measure labels printed on the ballot to include a short list of supporters and opponents taken from the signers of the arguments in favor and against the measures in the voter pamphlet.

### **BACKGROUND**

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The ballot label for each state ballot measure that voters see on the ballot currently provides a limited selection of key information voters need: its title, a very brief objective summary, and a very brief summary of its fiscal analysis — all in a maximum of 75 words.

But one other piece of information voters most want to know about each ballot measure is missing from the ballot label: who’s in favor of or against the measure. Putting on the ballot who supports and who opposes a ballot measure would provide voters with extremely important information to help them better evaluate and understand the value of the measure and make more informed decisions how to vote.

Although some well-funded ballot measure campaigns are able to spend enough to inform voters of the most important supporters or opponents (from their point of view), most campaigns don’t have the financial resources to directly communicate that information to California’s nearly 20 million registered voters in a way they’ll remember when they vote. This is another unfair advantage enjoyed by ballot measure campaigns supported by wealthy interests.

Voters can find supporters and opponents of state ballot measures in the voter pamphlet by looking at who signed the official arguments in favor and against. But many voters can’t get through the voter pamphlet in part because it is usually very long and dense. The 2018 General Election voter pamphlet was 96 pages long.

### **SOLUTION**

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SB 636 will show voters, on the ballot itself, the key information of who supports and opposes state ballot measures as listed in the official voter pamphlet for signers of the arguments in favor and against them.

It does so by allowing state ballot measure proponents to provide to the Secretary of State, when they submit their rebuttal arguments, a maximum 15-word list drawn from the signers of their voter pamphlet arguments in favor of the proposition and signers of their rebuttals to the

argument against the proposition. Likewise, the opponents would provide to the Secretary of State, when they submit their rebuttal arguments, a maximum 15-word listing of the signers of their voter pamphlet arguments against the proposition and signers of their rebuttals to the argument in favor the proposition.

The Secretary of State currently provides to counties a 75-word maximum ballot label for each state ballot measure, composed of the title, summary, and fiscal analysis, to print on the ballot. With SB 636, the Secretary of State will add to the end of each label “Supporters:” followed by the names of the ballot argument signers provided by the proponents, and “Opponents:” followed by the names of the ballot argument signers provided by the opponents.

Including in a ballot measure label the names of the voter pamphlet signers in favor of and against the measure will be a useful condensed summary of the arguments in the voter pamphlet in the same way that the current combination of title, summary, and fiscal analysis is a useful condensed summary of the full analysis by the legislative analyst in the voter pamphlet.

Adding a maximum 15-word list of supporters and opponents to each 75-word ballot label for state ballot measures will result in little if any increase in the overall length of ballots (depending on formatting) while providing voters with the crucial information they need to make better decisions at the time they most need it.

### **SUPPORT**

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California Clean Money Campaign (Sponsor)  
California League of Conservation Voters  
Consumer Watchdog  
Courage Campaign  
Endangered Habitats League  
GMO Free California  
Indivisible CA: StateStrong  
Maplight  
Money Out Voters In  
New Progressive Alliance  
People Demanding Action  
RootsAction  
Voices for Progress

### **STAFF CONTACT**

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