THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1511
Author: Committee on Elections
Amended: 8/27/25 in Senate
Vote: 27

SENATE ELECTIONS & C.A. COMMITTEE: 5-0, 7/15/25
AYES: Cervantes, Choi, Allen, Limón, Umberg

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0, 5/12/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Political Reform Act of 1974: refunding and transferring
contributions: voter information guide

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill clarifies that a candidate who raised money to run for one office, but who does not run in the primary election for that office, may use the contributions raised to run for a different office. This bill also makes minor corrections to update statutory language.

Senate Floor Amendments of 8/27/25 resolve chaptering conflicts with AB 808 (Addis).

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Includes the Political Reform Act (PRA), which establishes California's campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures, and which created the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.

2) Specifies that a candidate who receives campaign contributions for an election but does not file to run in the primary election can transfer campaign funds raised to a campaign committee for the same or different office.

3) Permits a candidate who has filed for a primary election to withdraw from the race up until the candidate filing deadline for that office. This provision does not apply to anyone running for statewide office.

4) Requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to mail a state voter information guide to all households in which voters are registered prior to each statewide election, except as specified. The guide must contain information including, among other items, a complete copy of each state measure, arguments and rebuttals for and against each state measure, an analysis of each state measure, and candidate statements.

5) Requires a county elections official to mail a county voter information guide to each voter in the jurisdiction prior to each election, except as specified. The county voter information guide must contain, among other things, a sample ballot, a notice of in-person voting locations, arguments and rebuttals for and against each local ballot measure, an analysis of each local ballot measure, and candidate statements.

This bill:

1) Clarifies that a candidate who withdrew from a primary ballot may still transfer funds raised to a campaign committee for the same or different office.

2) Updates the term "ballot pamphlet" where it appears in the PRA to "state voter information guide" or to "county voter information guide," as appropriate.

3) Deletes and corrects minor obsolete language in the PRA.

Comments

Committee Bill. This is one of the Assembly Elections Committee's annual omnibus bills, containing various minor, technical, and conforming changes to provisions of the PRA. All provisions contained in this bill address issues identified by Assembly Elections Committee staff.

Transfers of Campaign Contributions. SB 948 (Limón and Zbur, Chapter 125, Statutes of 2024) sought to codify advice the FPPC provided in 2010 (*Brown* Advice Letter, No. A-09-276). Under that advice, a candidate who raises money for the primary and general elections for one office, but who decides before the primary election not to run for that office, may transfer those campaign contributions to fund a run for a different office. SB 948 made it clear that such transfers are allowed even if the candidate did not "file a declaration of candidacy to qualify" for the primary election.

After SB 948 was signed into law, the Legislature approved AB 1784 (Pellerin, Chapter 355, Statutes of 2024). AB 1784 allows candidates for elective state office, other than statewide office, to withdraw nomination documents, including declarations of candidacy, after filing them for the primary election. This makes it possible for a candidate for elective state office to file a declaration of candidacy but subsequently withdraw that declaration and, as a result, not be a legally qualified candidate for that office at the primary election.

Late last year, FPPC staff proposed the adoption of a regulation that would have prohibited a candidate from transferring campaign contributions that a candidate raised for a general election if the candidate filed a declaration of candidacy for the primary election but subsequently withdrew that declaration, and so did not appear on the ballot at the primary election. In suggesting this change, FPPC staff pointed to language in SB 948 that allowed transfers of campaign contributions if a candidate did not file a declaration of candidacy. FPPC staff argued that the implication of that language was that a candidate should not be allowed to transfer contributions if the candidate did file a declaration of candidacy, but subsequently withdrew that declaration.

In response to that proposal, the authors of SB 948 sent a letter urging the FPPC not to adopt the proposed regulatory language and noting that it was inconsistent with their legislative intent of codifying the FPPC's 2010 advice. The letter also pointed out that because AB 1784 became law after SB 948 had been signed into law, "the Legislature did not specifically consider how the candidate transfer rules imposed by SB 948 should apply to candidates withdrawing from a primary election." At its meeting in January 2025, the FPPC deferred consideration on the regulatory proposal until after this legislative year to see whether the Legislature adopted any statutory changes to clarify the intent of SB 948.

This bill clarifies that a candidate who has raised money for a candidacy for one office, but who does not run in the primary election for that office, may transfer the campaign contributions raised for the primary and general election to a committee established by the candidate to run for a different office. This bill additionally specifies the intent of the Legislature in enacting this provision is to ensure that SB 948 is consistent with the FPPC's *Brown* advice letter.

Voter Information Guides. Existing state law provides for election officials to prepare voter information guides and to distribute them to voters prior to elections. For statewide elections, the SOS prepares and distributes a state voter information guide. County election officials prepare and distribute county voter information guides, which are tailored to each voter based on the contests that will appear on

the voter's ballot.

State law has used a variety of terms to refer to these official election publications, but prior legislative efforts have standardized the terminology used in the Elections Code. The PRA, however, still uses the outdated terms "ballot pamphlet" and "sample ballot" in a number of locations. The inconsistency can lead to confusion. This bill standardizes the terminology used in the PRA to conform to changes previously made in the Elections Code.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No   Fiscal Com.:   No   Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/27/25)

None received

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/27/25)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0, 5/12/25
AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
NO VOTE RECORDED: Nguyen, Stefani

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8/28/25 17:04:39

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