



## **BACKGROUND**

Proposition 9, which appeared on the June 1974 ballot, created the California Political Reform Act (PRA) and established California's system of regulating lobbying activity, campaign finance, and conflicts of interest for public officials. Proposition 9 created the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA. The PRA regulates lobbyists, including requiring lobbyists, lobbying firms, and lobbyist employers to register with the Secretary of State and to file periodic reports disclosing their activities.

## **COMMENTS**

- 1) Author's Statement. Public officials often make decisions based on the outreach from constituents. But what if the hundreds of comments that we are receiving are not from constituents, but are AI-generated? This is what this bill aims to fix. This bill expands existing provisions in the PRA in which lobbyists and lobbying firms cannot create fictitious characters to generate favor or disfavor of any proposed legislative action to organizations that employ lobbyists or lobbying firms as well.

In 2017, during the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Net Neutrality Hearing, the FCC received over 22 million comments from bots. These comments were not immediately flagged as AI generated because they appeared to have been drafted by real, concerned individuals. Nine years later, the ability for bots to mimic human dialogue, writing, and punctuation have only frightfully improved. As AI becomes increasingly more sophisticated, the line between AI generated and real-human comments has been blurring and becoming more indistinguishable, penetrating most aspects of our lives.

- 2) Arguments in Support. Writing in support, the bill's sponsor, the FPPC, notes that the PRA prohibits lobbyists and lobbying firms from engaging in a practice known as "astroturfing." The increased proliferation and accessibility of AI tools exacerbate the threat this deceptive practice poses to legislative and governmental decision making. This bill further protects governmental institutions from the potential influence of artificial opinion by extending the above prohibition to apply to lobbyist employers.

CFT – A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO writes in support that "[t]he bill's provisions will ensure that all entities employing lobbyists adhere to the highest standards of integrity by prohibiting efforts to create deceptive public perceptions, such as the use of bots, or generative AI to create the perception of additional supporters [or] opponents regarding legislative or administrative actions." CFT says that the bill builds trust in the legislative process, holds all parties accountable, aligns with the principles of transparency and honesty in political discourse, and supports the ongoing efforts to create a fairer and more transparent governmental process.

**PRIOR ACTION**

|                                    |        |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Assembly Floor:                    | 74 - 0 |
| Assembly Appropriations Committee: | 13 - 0 |
| Assembly Elections Committee:      | 8 - 0  |

**POSITIONS**

**Sponsor:** California Fair Political Practices Commission

**Support:** CFT — A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO  
League of Women Voters of California

**Oppose:** None received

**-- END --**