

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1789 (Boerner) – As Amended April 20, 2026

Policy Committee: Elections

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires candidates for elective office and treasurers for candidate-controlled committees to take a training class about the Political Reform Act (PRA) and doubles the threshold amount at which certain campaign contributions and expenditures must be itemized on campaign disclosure statements.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires, beginning January 1, 2029, an individual who files a statement of intention to be a candidate for elective office to complete a training course on candidate requirements under the PRA within 30 days of filing a statement of intention if the candidate has never completed the training course for that office, and prohibits a committee controlled by the candidate from receiving contributions until the candidate completes the training.
- 2) Requires, beginning January 1, 2029, a treasurer for a candidate-controlled committee to complete a training course on applicable requirements under the PRA within 30 days of the committee's submission of registration if the treasurer has not completed the course within four years, and prohibits a committee whose treasurer does not complete the training from receiving contributions until the training is complete.
- 3) Requires the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to develop, maintain, and offer the training courses on demand through an online platform.
- 4) Exempts certain candidates and treasurers from the training requirement, including a candidate for statewide elective office.
- 5) Increases, from \$100 to \$200, the threshold at which certain campaign contributions and expenditures (including slate mailer organization payments and disbursements) must be itemized on a campaign disclosure statement, but provides that the threshold increase is not operative until the Secretary of State certifies a new online filing and disclosure system (Cal-Access Replacement System).

FISCAL EFFECT:

Costs of approximately \$325,000 in the first year and \$311,000 annually thereafter to the FPPC for two additional positions to develop the new training courses and provide enforcement for non-compliance by candidates and treasurers (General Fund (GF)). Additionally, costs of

approximately \$80,000 annually to the FPPC for a software license for the training programs (GF).

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of GF structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, "Government transparency is important to maintain the public's trust." The author contends the training required by this bill will ensure that candidates and treasurers "understand and are prepared to comply with the [PRA]."
- 2) **Background. Training Program.** Although existing law does not require a candidate or committee treasurer to complete any training, the FPPC has prepared many informational and educational resources, including campaign manuals, fact sheets, and online webinars, to help educate the regulated community about their obligations under the PRA.

This bill requires, beginning January 1, 2029, certain candidates and treasurers to take such a training course developed by the FPPC. A candidate must complete the course within 30 days of filing a statement of intention if the candidate has never completed the course for the office for which the candidate files. Thus, for example, an individual who is a repeat candidate for State Assembly would only need to take the course one time, but if that individual becomes a candidate for local office, the individual must retake the course. It is unclear whether the FPPC will create different courses for different types of candidates. A treasurer must complete the course within 30 days of submission of registration for a candidate-controlled committee if the treasurer has not taken the course in the past four years. Notably, this bill exempts candidates for statewide office and their treasurers from the training requirement. According to the Assembly Elections Committee's analysis of this bill:

According to the sponsor of this bill, that limitation was included due to the fact that candidates for statewide office often are more experienced in dealing with the PRA, and thus are less likely to benefit from the training required by this bill...that is not universally true. For example, the primary election ballot for this year's race for Governor includes 61 candidates, many of whom appear to have little or no history of having held or run for elective federal, state, or local office.

Itemization Threshold. The reporting of campaign donations and spending allows enforcement agencies, including the FPPC and local prosecutors, to enforce contribution limits and other regulations, at times detecting instances of bribery, contribution laundering, and other violations. The PRA requires public disclosure of the name and street address of a campaign contributor who makes a contribution to a committee of \$100 or more and of a recipient to whom an expenditure of \$100 or more is made. The \$100 threshold was set in 1978, which is approximately the equivalent of \$522 today. This bill increases the reporting threshold to \$200, which will result in less campaign activity visible to the public. However, the higher threshold also allows a contributor to donate more money to a campaign without fear of retaliation over the contributor's public position on a candidate or ballot measure.

- 3) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is sponsored by the FPPC, which argues that the training program "will not only assist candidates but also improve compliance and timely

transparency” and increasing the itemization threshold “adjustment reflects a very modest cost of living adjustment that is less than half of the actual CPI inflation amount.”

This bill is opposed by California Common Cause, unless amended to “remove the proposed increase in the disclosure threshold.” The organization argues, “Even modest reductions in disclosure can undermine public trust and weaken oversight.”

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