

Date of Hearing: April 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS
Gail Pellerin, Chair
AB 2413 (Ransom) – As Amended April 8, 2026

SUBJECT: Large-format public advertisements: public expense.

SUMMARY: Prohibits certain large-format public advertisements from being published or displayed using public money if the advertisement that features an elected official affiliated with the agency that paid for the ad. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Prohibits a large-format public advertisement from being published or displayed at public expense.
- 2) Provides that a large-format public advertisement is prohibited if both the following criteria are met:
 - a) The large-format public advertisement includes the photograph of an elected officer affiliated with the agency that produces or purchases the large-format public advertisement, and is prepared in cooperation, consultation, coordination, or concert with the elected officer.
 - b) The costs of distribution of the advertisement are paid for with public money, or the costs of design, production, and printing are paid for with public money, and the design, production, or printing is done with the intent of publishing or displaying the advertisement.
- 3) Provides, for purposes of this bill, that “elected officer affiliated with the agency” means an elected officer who is a member, officer, or employee of the agency, or of a subunit thereof such as a committee, or who has supervisory control over the agency or appoints one or more members of the agency.
- 4) Defines a “large-format public advertisement,” for the purpose of this bill, to mean any of the following:
 - a) A billboard.
 - b) Wrap on a bus or other public transportation vehicle.
 - c) Advertisements affixed to a bus stop or other public infrastructure.
 - d) Other public advertisements that are 24 inches by 36 inches or more in size and that are specified by regulation.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Creates the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), and makes it responsible for the impartial, effective administration and implementation of the Political Reform Act (PRA). (Government Code §§81000 et seq.)
- 2) Makes violations of the PRA subject to administrative, civil, and criminal penalties. (Government Code §§83116, 91000-91005.5)
- 3) Prohibits a newsletter or other mass mailing from being sent at public expense. (Government Code §89001; 2 Cal. Code of Regs. Section 18901.1)
- 4) Prohibits mass mailing if the following criteria are met:
 - a) An item sent is delivered, by any means, to the recipient at the recipient's residence, place of employment or business, or post office box. The item delivered to the recipient is a tangible item, such as a videotape, record, or button, or a written document. The item sent features an elected officer affiliated with the agency that produces or sends the mailing, or includes the name, office, photograph, or other reference to an elected officer affiliated with the agency that produces or sends the mailing, and is prepared or sent in cooperation, consultation, coordination, or concert with the elected officer.
 - b) Any of the costs of distribution are paid for with public money or the costs of design, production, and printing exceeding \$50 are paid with public moneys, and the design, production, or printing is done with the intent of sending the item other than as permitted.
 - c) More than 200 substantially similar items are sent in a single calendar month, except as specified. (Government Code §89002(a))

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. State-mandated local program; contains a crimes and infractions disclaimer.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of the Bill:** According to the author:

California is a leader in providing strong protections to ensure fair elections that prohibit public dollars from being used for political advertising. Unfortunately, current law does not extend these protections to situations where publicly funded billboards prominently display elected officials' images. AB 2413 would close this gap in current law by prohibiting public funds from being used to feature elected officials' images on costly billboards. In doing so, this bill would further protect the public's trust in responsible government spending.

- 2) **Political Reform Act and Mass Mailings:** The PRA has specific rules concerning the sending of mass mailings at the public expense that mention public officials. With some exceptions, the PRA prohibits a mailing if each of the following criteria is met:

- **Delivery:** A tangible item, such as a newsletter or brochure, is delivered, by any means, including by transmission of a fax, to a person's residence, place of

employment or business, or post office box. (Emails, website postings, text messages, and recorded telephone messages/robocalls are not considered tangible items and therefore not subject to the PRA's mass mailing at public expense restrictions.)

- **Item Features an Elected Officer:** The item sent either features an elected officer affiliated with the agency (by including the officer's photo or signature, or singling out the officer by the manner their name or office is displayed), or the item includes a reference to an elected officer affiliated with the agency and the item is prepared or sent in cooperation with the elected officer.
- **Public Moneys:** Any of the costs of distribution are paid for with public moneys, or if public funds are not used for the actual distribution, in excess of \$50 in public moneys is used to design, produce, or print the item and the design, production, or printing is done with the intent of sending the item other than as permitted by the PRA.
- **Mass Mailing:** More than 200 substantially similar items are sent in a calendar month, excluding any item sent in response to an unsolicited request.

Generally, certain mass mailings, such as a mailing in which an elected officer's name appears only in the letterhead or roster listing, public meeting announcement, announcement of any official agency event or business cards, are not prohibited under the PRA.

- 3) **New Prohibition:** The author contends that publicly funded billboards featuring elected officials purchased with public funds should be carefully scrutinized. Ensuring taxpayer-funded communications remain informational rather than promotional helps maintain public trust and ensure appropriate stewardship of public resources. This bill creates a new prohibition in the PRA and prohibits a large-format public advertisement from being published or displayed if the ad features an elected official affiliated with the agency that prepared the ad and the costs of distribution or design of the ad were paid for with public funds.
- 4) **Examples:** The author cites two main examples that warrant the need for this bill. The first example is a billboard campaign paid for by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which included large photos of locally elected board members. Generally, the billboards are part of a public awareness and educational campaign to reach Valley residents and generate public interest in and support of air quality improvement projects and effect meaningful changes in public behavior. The author argues that public education campaigns are important and an appropriate use of public funds, but it becomes a problem when elected officials are being featured and it can be seen as political advertising.

The second example is physical and digital billboards along freeways and thoroughfares around Sacramento that include a photograph of Sacramento County Sheriff Jim Cooper. Media articles state that billboards are part of a public awareness campaign to address retail theft and that the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office has taken out approximately 20 billboards across the county to advertise efforts to stop theft from retail stores with many

featuring the elected Sheriff himself.

- 5) **Arguments in Support:** In support of this bill, the Fair Political Practices Commission, writes:

The Political Reform Act of 1974 (PRA) currently prohibits certain mass mailings from being sent at the public expense if they feature an elected official or include the name, office, photograph, or other reference to an elected officer affiliated with the agency that produces or sends the mailing.

AB 2413 would add a similar prohibition for large-format public advertisements, as defined, that includes the photograph of an elected officer affiliated with the agency that produces or purchases the large-format public advertisement, and is prepared in cooperation, consultation, coordination, or concert with the elected officer.

- 6) **Political Reform Act of 1974:** California voters passed an initiative, Proposition 9, in 1974 that created the FPPC and codified significant restrictions and prohibitions on candidates, officeholders and lobbyists. That initiative is commonly known as the PRA. Amendments to the PRA that are not submitted to the voters, such as those contained in this bill, must further the purposes of the initiative and require a two-thirds vote of both houses of the Legislature.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Fair Political Practices Commission

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Nichole Becker / ELECTIONS / (916) 319-2094