
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 950	Hearing Date:	7/15/25
Author:	Solache		
Version:	7/8/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Carrie Cornwell		

Subject: Political Reform Act of 1974: advertisements

DIGEST

This bill makes changes to disclosures required in campaign advertisements so they are shorter and take up less space, including for those on billboards.

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) Defines "advertisement," for the purposes of the PRA, as any general or public communication that is authorized and paid for by a campaign committee to support or oppose at least one candidate for elective office or at least one ballot measure.
- 3) Requires advertisements that support or oppose candidates or ballot measures to include disclosure statements that comply with certain formatting, display, legibility, and audibility requirements.
- 4) Requires these disclosure statements typically to disclose the committee paying for the advertisement, the top contributors to the committee paying for the advertisement, the use of artificial intelligence in its making, and in the case of independent expenditures, a notation that reads, "This advertisement was not authorized or paid for by a candidate for this office or a committee controlled by a candidate for this office."
- 5) Requires, in the case of a printed advertisement that is larger than those designed to be individually distributed including yard signs and billboards, that the disclosures be in Arial equivalent type font with each line taking up a total height of at least 5 percent of the height of the advertisement, and printed on a solid background with sufficient contrast that is easily readable by the average viewer.
- 6) Excludes from the definition of advertisement, items such as skywriting, apparel, and small items, on which it would be very difficult to include the required disclosures.

This bill:

- 1) Names itself the Billboard Disclose Act.
- 2) Allows the shortening of names of top contributors in required disclosure statements in advertisements by, among other things:
 - a) Leaving out from the beginning of the name “The,” “A,” or “An.”
 - b) Leaving out from the end of the name “and affiliated entities,” “and its subsidiaries,” “state council,” “of America,” “of California,” and enumerated other similar terms.
 - c) Replacing the name of the candidate-controlled committee with the name of the candidate and office, if the candidate is a current officeholder.
 - d) Authorizing numerous common abbreviations, including “&” for “and,” “Fed.” for “Federation,” and state abbreviations (e.g., CA for California).
 - e) Authorizing the FPPC to approve additional abbreviations that are widely recognized and unambiguous in meaning.
- 3) Mandates, among many formatting changes, that disclosures in print advertisements, including billboards, appear as applicable in the following order:
 - a) The notice that the advertisement was created using artificial intelligence. This notice shall be set off from other disclosures by half a blank line;
 - b) That the advertisement was not paid for by the candidate;
 - c) Who paid for the advertisement;
 - d) Top contributors, which shall be listed in bold, displayed with the phrase, “Ad Committee’s Top Funders,” which shall be underlined.
- 4) Requires, for billboards and other printed advertisements that are larger than those designed to be individually distributed:
 - a) The names of top contributors be separated by bullet points or numbering, instead of commas, and appear on one horizontal line if possible.
 - b) Each line of the disclosure must take up at least the lesser of 5 percent of the width or the height of the billboard or other printed material.
- 5) Shortens the disclosure on an advertisement paid for by an independent expenditure to read, “Not paid for by candidate” or “Not paid for by a candidate for this office,” as applicable.

BACKGROUND

The Disclose Act and Other Previous Legislation. AB 249 (Mullin), Chapter 546, Statutes of 2017, which is commonly known as the “Disclose Act,” significantly changed the content and format of disclosure statements required on campaign advertisements, in order to make the disclosures more prominent. AB 249 also established new requirements to determine which contributors must be listed on campaign advertisements.

Since AB 249’s enactment, several other bills have modified the content and format of the required disclosure statements. Notably, AB 2188 (Mullin), Chapter 754, Statutes of 2018, required online platforms that sell political ads to make specified information about those political ads available to the public and made various changes to the format for disclosures required on electronic media ads. AB 201 (Cervantes), Chapter 555, Statutes of 2019, required a text message that supports or opposes a candidate or ballot measure to disclose the name of the candidate or committee that paid for the text message and, in certain circumstances, the top contributors to the committee.

The Disclose Act’s approach was also extended to apply to initiative, referendum, and recall petitions with the passage of SB 47 (Allen), Chapter 563, Statutes of 2019. Among other things, SB 47 required that an official top funders disclosure be made either on the petition itself or on a separate sheet that identifies the name of the committee and any qualifying top contributors.

Most recently, SB 1360 (Umberg), Chapter 887, Statutes of 2022, changed the text and formatting of required disclosures on petitions, electronic media, and video campaign advertisements. It also required the disclosure of top contributors funding the advertisements on electronic media advertisements.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author’s Statement. The current disclosure size requirements for political advertisements on billboards have created unintended consequences that are hampering effective and affordable political advertising in this medium. They also reduce the legibility of the disclosure information, making it difficult for viewers to quickly identify sponsors while maintaining the necessary transparency. This bill seeks to implement modest adjustments to ensure that the actual political advertisement can still be seen.
- 2) Arguments in Support. The California Outdoor Advertising Association, the bill’s sponsor, states that:

This bill provides a necessary and balanced solution to ensure both transparency and readability in political advertisements while preserving the effectiveness of billboard messaging.

California’s existing laws require political advertisements to disclose their sponsors to promote transparency and inform voters. However, in the case of yard signs or billboards (particularly for committees supporting or opposing a candidate or proposition), the regulations have inadvertently resulted in

disclosures that can consume up to 50% of the total space on the sign. For a committee, the top three contributors must be listed, each taking up a minimum of 5% of the sign's height/space, which can crowd out the messaging of the advertisement itself. This can make advertisements difficult to read and reduce the viability of billboards as a means of political communication. The disproportionate size of the disclosure text undermines the intent of the law by impairing legibility.

- 3) Technical amendment. When amending the bill in the future, the author may wish to correct a minor omission in the bill, as follows:

On page 7, line 26, after “on” add “a”

PRIOR ACTION

Assembly Floor:	71 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	15 - 0
Assembly Elections Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Sponsors: California State Outdoor Advertising Association
California Clean Money Campaign

Support: None received

Oppose: None received

-- END --