

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 900 (McNerney) – As Amended May 14, 2026

Policy Committee: Elections

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill reduces the amount and spacing of text that must appear on certain political advertisements.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Allows the name of a top contributor required to be disclosed on certain campaign advertisements to be shorted by using approved abbreviations or leaving out certain words from the contributor's name, including abbreviations and non-essential words meeting certain criteria as determined by the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) and published or provided in written advice.
- 2) Requires existing disclosures for certain print advertisements, including large-format printed advertisements such as a yard sign or billboard, be displayed in a particular order and revises the formatting requirements for such disclosures.
- 3) Shortens the disclaimer for an advertisement paid for by an independent expenditure.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Costs of approximately \$211,000 in the first year and \$204,000 annually thereafter to the FPPC for an additional attorney position to determine whether an abbreviation is approved or word is non-essential in the name of a top contributor via written advice, as the FPPC anticipates receiving numerous advice requests (General Fund). The FPPC will also incur costs to update educational materials and trainings to reflect the other revised disclosure requirements.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

The Citizens United decision has opened the floodgates to political spending...California has made several positive steps to daylight who is funding political messaging; however some disclosure messages have become cumbersome to read and confusing to voters. SB 900 will reformat disclosure messages to be shorter and easier to understand.

- 2) **Balancing Disclosure.** Campaign disclosure laws promote transparency by informing the public about the entities funding political advertisements. However, strict disclaimer requirements may also be impractical or overly burdensome, and thus potentially infringe on First Amendment rights, particularly when considering certain forms of communication. To balance these competing interests, existing law includes exceptions and accommodations to ease disclaimer requirements in specific circumstances. For example, for formats like radio or pre-recorded phone ads, for which full disclaimers would occupy a disproportionate amount of time, the law permits shortened versions that disclose fewer contributors to maintain the effectiveness and feasibility of such ads. This bill reduces the space required for certain political disclaimers by allowing abbreviated text content and formatting adjustments.
- 3) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is co-sponsored by the California Clean Money Campaign and California State Outdoor Advertising Association, with the latter arguing this bill “seeks to address the unintended consequences of the current political advertisement disclosure size requirements” by ensuring “both transparency and readability in political advertisements while preserving the effectiveness.” This bill is also supported by other voter empowerment and community groups.

This bill is opposed by the California Chamber of Commerce, unless the bill is amended to “further promote clarity and administrable standards,” arguing that “ambiguity creates a ‘chilling effect’ where persons are discouraged from speaking at all for fear of violating the Act.”

- 4) **Related Legislation.** AB 950 (Solache) is similar to this bill. AB 950 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee’s suspense file.

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