



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

City Legislative Advocacy Position to Increase Disclosure Statement Requirements for Political Advertisements

BACKGROUND

This report is presented at the request of the Mayor to provide the Council with an opportunity to establish a legislative advocacy position supporting efforts for greater transparency in political advertisements.

In 2012, the Council voted to support AB 1648 (Brownley) which attempted to make changes to required disclosures on campaign advertisements and mailers. That measure failed to pass out of the Senate. Similarly, in 2013, SB 52 (Leno and Hill), known as the DISCLOSE Act, failed in the State Assembly's final voting period of the legislative session. The bill would have required all political advertisements to prominently display the names of their three biggest funders.

In the past, regarding this topic, Council has taken positions on specific legislation. Although staff does not make a recommendation on whether or not the Council should take a position on this topic, it does urge Council to establish a long-term policy rather than specifically endorse a certain measure. That approach will enable Council and staff to perform advocacy in the future without having to return to Council for specific approval.

EXISTING POLICY

Council Policy 7.4.14 Legislative Advocacy Positions: The LAP is utilized by Councilmembers and staff throughout the year to determine City positions on legislation and intergovernmental issues and minimizes the need for staff to request direction from Council on legislation and issues as they arise.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

N/A

DISCUSSION

Legislation has once again been introduced at the State Capitol which would pursue additional regulations and requirements regarding funding sources of political advertisements. AB 700 (Levine and Gomez) is one such bill, which would require significantly greater transparency in political ads. The bill requires the top three funders of ballot measure ads to be shown clearly and unambiguously on the ads themselves. It also requires that the funders disclosed on ads be the original sources of the contributions to the committee that paid for the ad, regardless if funds went through other committees or organizations.

According to the National Institute on Money in State Politics, over \$640 million was spent on ballot measures alone in the last two election cycles in California. Most of it was spent by committees, without disclosure of the true funders, by using committee names such as "Stop Special Interest Money Now" or "Californians Against Higher Health Care Costs".

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact as a result of the action taken via this report.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's website.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct staff to establish a City Legislative Position to Increase Disclosure Statement Requirements for Political Advertisements.
2. Other direction by Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff makes no recommendation.

Although staff does not make a recommendation on whether or not the Council should take a position on this topic, it does urge Council to establish a long-term policy rather than specifically endorse a certain measure. This approach will enable Council and staff to perform advocacy in the future without having to return to Council for specific approval.

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