



WOMEN'S ENERGY MATTERS

April 15, 2024

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear
 Chair, Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee
 1020 N Street, Room 533
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Cc: The Honorable Ben Allen and other Members of the Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee

RE: SB 1422, Travel DISCLOSE Act (Allen) – Strong Support

Dear Chair Blakespear:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing a broad cross section of Californians, are writing in strong support for SB 1422, the *Travel DISCLOSE Act*.

We respectfully request that you vote for Senate Bill 1422, the *Travel DISCLOSE Act*, which will remove an exception in current law that allows most organizations to avoid reporting when they pay for elected officials' travel expenses, and will expand the required reports to disclose other important information to the public.

After a scandal leading to criminal investigations of the then-California Public Utilities Commission President who received gifts of over \$230,000 in international travel¹, including trips accompanied by utility executives, the legislature nearly unanimously passed SB 21 (Hill) in 2015 to require nonprofit organizations to disclose to the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) the names of their donors of \$1,000 or more who accompanied an elected official on the travel the nonprofit paid for if the nonprofit met two thresholds.

These disclosures are even more critical now. In 2023, California legislators reported a record total of more than \$1.1 million in travel expenses paid for by nonprofits, corporations, and individuals.² But in May 2023, a CalMatters investigative story found that only two nonprofits filed the disclosures in the eight years they've been required since SB 21 was adopted.³

The reason is that organizations which reach the \$10,000 threshold in travel spending required by SB 21 rarely also reach SB 21's other threshold of travel spending equaling more than one-third of their total expenses.

Fifteen nonprofits spent over \$10,000 on legislators' travel in 2022. However, only one of the fifteen nonprofit's travel spending exceeded one-third of total expenses reported on their IRS Form 990s. This means the remaining fourteen did not have to disclose this spending under current law, contrary to the original intent of the legislature and the needs of public disclosure.

Other organizations that paid for elected officials' travel told CalMatters they are trade associations exempt from the law. In addition, 37 corporations and 7 individuals were listed by legislators as having paid for travel expenses since 2016. Although none of them spent over \$10,000 in a calendar year, there is no reason they shouldn't be required to disclose if they do, similar to the requirement they file major donor reports if they make contributions or expenditures totaling \$10,000 or more in a year.

SB 1422 strengthens current law disclosure requirements by eliminating the one-third threshold and expanding the law to include any non-government entity or individual spending over \$10,000 annually on travel for elected officials (\$5,000 for a single official).

In addition to the currently required disclosure of donors who went on the trips and who gave \$1,000 or more to the entity in a calendar year, SB 1422 mandates disclosure of any donors who knowingly contributed \$1,000 or more toward such trips. It also requires disclosure of the total annual donations of each of the listed donors.

SB 1422 further expands the disclosures to include trip locations, dates, the names of elected officials that went on each trip, and the names of any donors who went along.

¹ "Peevey presides over last CPUC meeting amid controversy", ABC 7 News, 12/18/2024. <https://abc7news.com/emails-pge-laws-california/442082/>

² California Clean Money Campaign analysis of legislators' Form 700 disclosures reported on the FPPC website.

³ "This law should reveal who's paying for California legislators' travel. It's only been used twice". CalMatters, 5/18/2023. <https://calmatters.org/politics/2023/05/california-legislators-travel-disclosure/>

Trips for elected officials can spark valuable policy ideas and legislation, as evidenced in the CalMatters story headlined, “Free trips for California legislators lead to bills”.⁴ The importance of such trips is why strengthening disclosure of who pays for them and travels with elected officials is so crucial to the public.

For these reasons, the organizations below STRONGLY SUPPORT SB 1422 and respectfully request your AYE vote.

Thank you.

FROM: **California Clean Money Campaign**, Trent Lange, Executive Director (Sponsor)
Californians for Disability Rights, Randy Hicks, Senior Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity, Roger Lin, Senior Attorney
Clean Coalition, Craig Lewis, Leader, Legislative Chair
Consumer Federation of California, Robert Herrell, Executive Director
Consumer Watchdog, Carmen Balber, Executive Director
Courage California, Irene Kao, Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League, Dan Silver, Executive Director
Indivisible CA: Statestrong, Dennessa Atilas, Senior Regional Organizer - West Coast
League of Women Voters of California, Dora Rose, Deputy Director
Money Out People In, Sheilah Fish, Founder
Money Out Voters In, Michele Sutter, Co-Founder
Progressive Democrats of America, California, Mike Thaller, President
RootsAction.org, Bill Lackemacher, Digital Coordinator
Voices for Progress, Evan Minton, CA State Senior Policy & Programmatic Manager
Voters Right to Know, Jim Heerwagen, Chair

350 Conejo, Alan Weiner, President
350 South Bay LA, Sherry Lear, Director
350 Southland Legislative Alliance, Micheal Rochmess, Steering
350 Ventura County Climate Hub, Jan Dietrick, Director
Acterra, Action for a Healthy Planet, Lauren Weston, Executive Director
Ballona Institute, Marcia Hanscom, Founder
Ban SUP, Cheryl Auger, President
California Alliance for Community Energy, Barbara Stebbins, Steering Committee
California Climate Voters, Micah Perlin, Director
Californians for Energy Choice, Eric Brooks, Leader
CleanEarth4Kids.org, Suzanne Hume, Director
Coastal Lands Action Network, Dee Fromm, Co-Founder
Courageous Resistance of the Desert, Susan St. Louis, Leader
Custom Power Solar, Jean Woo, Director
Defend Ballona Wetlands, Robert van de Hoek, President
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area, Leah Redwood, Organizer
Glendale Environmental Coalition, Elise Kalfayan, Board Member
Habitable Designs, Rob Howe, Director
Hammond Climate Solutions, Karinna Gonzalez, Deputy Director
Hang Out Do Good, Jennifer Levin, Director
Indivisible California Green Team, Jennifer Tanner, Leader
Local Clean Energy Alliance, Jessica Tovar, Director
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy, Dave Shukla, Director

⁴ “How free trips for California legislators lead to bills”, CalMatters, 5/4/2023.
<https://calmatters.org/politics/2023/05/california-legislature-trips-bills/>

Long Beach Environmental Alliance, John Kindred, Co-Founder
Progressive Democrats of the Santa Monica Mountains, Dorothy Reik, President
Recolte Energy, Gopal Shanker, President
San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club, Emily Brandt, Leader
San Jose Community Energy Advocates, Ruth Merino, Leader
San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, Linda Seeley, Leader Democratic Club
Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action, Katherine Park, Co-leader student state advocacy
So Cal 350, Jack Eidt, Director
Sonoma County Democratic Party, Dale Axelrod, Chair, Leg committee
Sustainable Systems Research Foundation, Ronnie D. Lipschutz, Co-director
The Climate Alliance of Santa Cruz County, Magi Amma, Leader
Unrig LA, Rog Quan, Lead Organizer
Valley Women's Club Environmental Committee, Nancy Macy, Leader
Women's Energy Matters, Jean Merrigan, Director