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April 8, 2024

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

**RE: SB 1441 (Allen): Examination of petitions: time limitations and reimbursement of costs
As Amended April 4, 2024 – SUPPORT
Set to be heard on April 16, 2024 – Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments
Committee**

Dear Senator Blakespear,

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), representing all 58 counties in California, is pleased to support Senate Bill (SB) 1441 by Senator Ben Allen. This measure would preserve local election resources by establishing reasonable timeframes for the examination of failed petitions. The bill would also protect those vital public resources by allowing local election officials to recover the costs of the examinations.

Existing law, [Government Code section 7924.110](#), states that a petition proponent has up to 21 days after certification of insufficiency to commence an examination of disqualified petition signatures. However, the statute does not provide proponents of a failed petition with a time limit for their review of the insufficient signatures. Also, the law is silent about cost recovery by the county for staff time and other public resources utilized during the examination process.

Election officers have been tasked with managing increasingly complex and expensive elections. In recent years, election officers have navigated rapidly changing election laws, conducted elections during a global pandemic, endured harassment by the public and direct threats to their safety, and have needed to counter the rampant spread of misinformation. Policies that are core to our democratic values, like the laws allowing the recall of public officials who have lost the faith of their constituents, are exploited by those who can consume local resources that deplete public resources that could otherwise be utilized to improve our communities.

Current law has enabled petition proponents in some jurisdictions to abuse this access to public resources through indefinite time for examination of failed petitions without any obligation to reimburse the county's costs. In one egregious case, the 14-month examination by proponents of a failed petition resulted in over \$1 million taxpayer dollars spent to hire additional staff.

SB 1441 is a fair and reasonable approach to address the abuses of the failed petition examination process. The bill builds off of established policies, like [Elections Code section 15624](#), which establishes cost recovery for voter-initiated recount efforts. Broadly, the bill helps local election officials preserve resources necessary to conduct free and fair elections that are accessible to all voters.

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear
Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee
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For these reasons, CSAC is proud to support SB 1441 and respectfully requests your AYE vote. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding our position, please do not hesitate to contact me at elawyer@counties.org.

Sincerely,



Eric Lawyer
Legislative Advocate

cc: The Honorable Ben Allen, California State Senate
Members and Consultant, Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee
Cory Botts, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus