

May 20, 2014

Dear Governor and members of the Legislature,



California voters and decision-makers continue searching for common-sense responses to recent ethics-related headlines, while California's online systems for ensuring political transparency languish behind nearly all states.



Plans to upgrade the state's online system for campaign and lobbying data, Cal-Access, has progressed slowly; optimistic estimates place its launch in 2017. The Fair Political Practices Commission also has demonstrated leadership in moving economic interest data regarding officials' finances online; however that project is moving slowly through the procurement process. Recent events and the inadequacies of the existing system mandate swift action. There are several courses of action open to the Governor and the Legislature to accelerate development of technologies with the potential to restore trust among Californians.



With both the FPPC and the Secretary of State's offices pursuing substantial technology upgrades, a singular opportunity exists to coordinate these projects, create efficiency and improve overall transparency in campaign finance and the economic interests of elected officials. The State can pursue shared infrastructure or parallel development paths that leverage both projects and drive a cost effective process and streamlined system that bolsters transparency and efficiency.



Both agencies are slowed by a cumbersome procurement process and lack of monetary and staff resources to advance their projects. The Legislature and Governor should provide these resources and work with leading technologists to streamline the procurement and development process. Earlier this year California Forward released, "Rebooting Campaign Finance Disclosure," a report which offered recommendations to state policymakers on how to upgrade Cal-Access and support FPPC's modernization of Form 700 filing and disclosure. The undersigned organizations support accelerating these projects and are willing to assist the State in doing so.



While funding of Cal-Access is a key issue, it can be addressed with existing resources. Cal-Access' special fund, the Political DATA Fund, receives revenues from the registration fees of lobbying entities and campaign

committees. The revenue from this special fund, ranging from \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually, is unable to pay for the replacement of Cal-Access in the short term but could be used to finance a loan from the State's General Fund.

We encourage the Governor and Legislature to include an appropriation within the State Budget for a \$10 million loan to the Secretary of State's office for the purpose of developing a new, flexible, and modernized Cal-Access to meet today's data and web standards by the 2016 election. The funds would be repaid to the General Fund with revenues from the Political DATA account. We suggest this loan be contingent on active collaboration between the FPPC and Secretary of State's offices to develop strategies that will foster an efficient development process, as well as to ensure the systems are inter-operable and the data is easily matched and analyzed.

The Governor and Legislature also could ensure the FPPC has the expert resources necessary to develop necessary plans and ensure that funding is appropriated in the State Budget to initiate development of a modernized Form 700 filing system as soon as possible.

We call on the Governor and the State Legislature to consider the options above and exert leadership on these critical projects. Please contact Phillip Ung, director of public affairs for CA Fwd, at (916) 244-1530 or phillip@cafwd.org if you have any questions or comments about our request.