

Senate Bill No. 45

CHAPTER 827

An act to add Sections 89002 and 89003 to the Government Code, relating to the Political Reform Act of 1974.

[Approved by Governor October 15, 2017. Filed with
Secretary of State October 15, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 45, Mendoza. Political Reform Act of 1974: mass mailing prohibition.

The Political Reform Act of 1974 prohibits sending mass mailings at public expense. The act defines "mass mailing" as over 200 substantially similar pieces of mail not including form letters or other mail that is sent in response to an unsolicited request, letter, or other inquiry. An existing regulation adopted by the Fair Political Practices Commission prescribes criteria for mass mailings that are prohibited by the act and for mass mailings that are permissible under the act.

This bill would codify this regulation. The bill would additionally prohibit a mass mailing from being sent within the 60 days preceding an election by or on behalf of a candidate whose name will appear on the ballot, except as specified.

A willful violation of the act's provisions is punishable as a misdemeanor. By expanding the scope of an existing crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The Political Reform Act of 1974, an initiative measure, provides that the Legislature may amend the act to further the act's purposes upon a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of each house of the Legislature and compliance with specified procedural requirements.

This bill would declare that it furthers the purposes of the act.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 89002 is added to the Government Code, to read: 89002. (a) Except as provided in subdivision (b), a mailing is prohibited by Section 89001 if all of the following criteria are met:

(1) An item sent is delivered, by any means, to the recipient at his or her residence, place of employment or business, or post office box. The item

delivered to the recipient must be a tangible item, such as a videotape, record, or button, or a written document.

(2) The item sent either:

(A) Features an elected officer affiliated with the agency that produces or sends the mailing.

(B) Includes the name, office, photograph, or other reference to an elected officer affiliated with the agency that produces or sends the mailing, and is prepared or sent in cooperation, consultation, coordination, or concert with the elected officer.

(3) Any of the costs of distribution are paid for with public money or the costs of design, production, and printing exceeding fifty dollars (\$50) are paid with public moneys, and the design, production, or printing is done with the intent of sending the item other than as permitted by this section.

(4) More than 200 substantially similar items are sent in a single calendar month, excluding any item sent in response to an unsolicited request and any item described in subdivision (b).

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a mass mailing of the following items is not prohibited by Section 89001:

(1) An item in which the elected officer's name appears only in the letterhead or logotype of the stationery, forms, including "For Your Information" or "Compliments of" cards or stamps, and envelopes of the agency sending the mailing, or of a committee of the agency, or of the elected officer, or in a roster listing containing the names of all elected officers of the agency. For purposes of this section, the return address portion of a self-mailer is considered the envelope. In any such item, the names of all elected officers must appear in the same type size, typeface, type color, and location. The item shall not include the elected officer's photograph, signature, or any other reference to the elected officer, except as specifically permitted by this section. The item may, however, include the elected officer's office or district number and the elected officer's name or district number in his or her Internet Web site address or electronic mail address.

(2) A press release sent to members of the media.

(3) An item sent in the normal course of business from one governmental entity or officer to another governmental entity or officer, including all local, state, and federal officers or entities.

(4) An intra-agency communication sent in the normal course of business to employees, officers, deputies, and other staff.

(5) An item sent in connection with the payment or collection of funds by the agency sending the mailing, including tax bills, checks, and similar documents, in any instance in which use of the elected officer's name, office, title, or signature is necessary to the payment or collection of the funds. The item shall not include the elected officer's photograph, signature, or any other reference to the elected officer, except as specifically permitted by this section.

(6) Any item sent by an agency responsible for administering a government program, to persons subject to that program, in any instance in which the mailing of the item is essential to the functioning of the program,

the item does not include the elected officer's photograph, and use of the elected officer's name, office, title, or signature is necessary to the functioning of the program.

(7) Any legal notice or other item sent as required by law, court order, or order adopted by an administrative agency pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2), and in which use of the elected officer's name, office, title, or signature is necessary in the notice or other mailing. For purposes of this paragraph, inclusion of an elected officer's name on a ballot as a candidate for elective office, and inclusion of an elected officer's name and signature on a ballot argument, shall be considered necessary to that notice or other item.

(8) A telephone directory, organization chart, or similar listing or roster which includes the names of elected officers as well as other individuals in the agency sending the mailing, in which the name of each elected officer and individual listed appears in the same type size, typeface, and type color. The item shall not include an elected officer's photograph, name, signature, or any other reference to an elected officer, except as specifically permitted by this section.

(9) (A) An announcement of any meeting or event of either of the following:

(i) An announcement sent to an elected officer's constituents concerning a public meeting that is directly related to the elected officer's incumbent governmental duties, is to be held by the elected officer, and that the elected officer intends to attend.

(ii) An announcement of any official agency event or events for which the agency is providing the use of its facilities or staff or other financial support.

(B) Any announcement provided for in this paragraph shall not include the elected officer's photograph or signature and may include only a single mention of the elected officer's name except as permitted elsewhere in this section.

(10) An agenda or other writing that is required to be made available pursuant to Sections 11125.1 and 54957.5, or a bill, file, history, journal, committee analysis, floor analysis, agenda of an interim or special hearing of a committee of the Legislature, or index of legislation, published by the Legislature.

(11) A business card that does not contain the elected officer's photograph or more than one mention of the elected officer's name.

(c) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) "Elected officer affiliated with the agency" means an elected officer who is a member, officer, or employee of the agency, or of a subunit thereof such as a committee, or who has supervisory control over the agency or appoints one or more members of the agency.

(2) "Features an elected officer" means that the item mailed includes the elected officer's photograph or signature or singles out the elected officer

by the manner of display of his or her name or office in the layout of the document, such as by headlines, captions, type size, typeface, or type color.

(3) “Substantially similar” is defined as follows:

(A) Two items are “substantially similar” if any of the following applies:

(i) The items are identical, except for changes necessary to identify the recipient and his or her address.

(ii) The items are intended to honor, commend, congratulate, or recognize an individual or group, or individuals or groups, for the same event or occasion, are intended to celebrate or recognize the same holiday, or are intended to congratulate an individual or group, or individuals or groups, on the same type of event, such as birthdays or anniversaries.

(iii) Both of the following apply to the items mailed:

(I) Most of the bills, legislation, governmental action, activities, events, or issues of public concern mentioned in one item are mentioned in the other.

(II) Most of the information contained in one item is contained in the other.

(B) Enclosure of the same informational materials in two items mailed, such as copies of the same bill, public document, or report, shall not, by itself, mean that the two items are “substantially similar.” The informational materials shall not include the elected officer’s name, photograph, signature, or any other reference to the elected officer except as permitted elsewhere in this section.

(C) An item is only considered substantially similar to other items sent by the same official, not to items sent by other officials in the same agency.

(4) “Unsolicited request” is defined as follows:

(A) A written or oral communication, including a petition, that specifically requests a response and is not requested or induced by the recipient elected officer or by any third person acting at his or her behest. However, an unsolicited oral or written communication, including a petition, that does not contain a specific request for a response shall be deemed to constitute an unsolicited request for a single written response.

(B) An unsolicited request for continuing information on a subject shall be deemed an unsolicited request for multiple responses directly related to that subject for a period of time not to exceed 24 months. An unsolicited request to receive a regularly published agency newsletter shall be deemed an unsolicited request for each issue of that newsletter.

(C) A previously unsolicited request to receive an agency newsletter or mass mailing on an ongoing basis shall not be deemed to have become solicited by the sole fact that the requestor responds to an agency notice indicating that, in the absence of a response, his or her name will be purged from the mailing list for that newsletter or mass mailing. A notice in the following language shall be deemed to meet this standard:

“The law does not permit this office to use public funds to keep you updated on items of interest unless you specifically request that it do so.”

Inclusion of a similar notice in other items does not constitute a solicitation under this section.

(D) A communication sent in response to an elected officer's participation at a public forum or press conference, or to his or her issuance of a press release, shall be deemed an unsolicited request.

(E) A person who subscribes to newspapers or other periodicals published by persons other than elected officers shall be deemed to have made unsolicited requests for materials published in those subscription publications.

SEC. 2. Section 89003 is added to the Government Code, to read:

89003. Notwithstanding subdivision (b) of Section 89002, a mass mailing, as defined in Section 82041.5, that meets the criteria of subdivision (a) of Section 89002 shall not be sent within the 60 days preceding an election by or on behalf of a candidate whose name will appear on the ballot at that election, except as provided in paragraphs (2) to (8), inclusive, and paragraph (10) of subdivision (b) of Section 89002.

SEC. 3. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

SEC. 4. The Legislature finds and declares that this bill furthers the purposes of the Political Reform Act of 1974 within the meaning of subdivision (a) of Section 81012 of the Government Code.