



# STOP THE SPECIAL EXEMPTIONS ACT

## Tough Questions about Proposition 32

**Won't this save the state and taxpayers money by getting all of the special interests out of the system?**

While Prop 32 claims to be about stopping special interest money, it is not at all what it seems. It was intentionally written to create special exemptions for billionaire businessmen, giving them even more political power to write their own set of rules.

Prop 32 is more appropriately called the **Special Exemptions Act**, because it exempts secretive Super PACs, which can raise unlimited amounts of money from corporate special interests and billionaire businessmen to support their candidates or defeat their enemies. And it does nothing to stop anonymous donors from influencing elections.

In addition, this measure would create a whole new state bureaucracy to enforce the law, costing taxpayers more than a million dollars annually – even during a time when we are cutting vital state services.

**Why shouldn't unions have to ask for authorization every year before deducting funds from your paycheck ?**

Prop 32 makes it seem like it gives union members more of a say. The fact is current law already protects workers' rights. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that no one can be forced to join a union and contribute to politics. What Prop 32 does do is add a new requirement that even voluntary contributions from employees must be accompanied by annual, written permission to use the funds. And payroll deductions are made illegal, even if written permission is given by the employee.

**California has the second highest unemployment in the country, half our schools are failing, and we have the highest sales tax and third highest income tax in the nation? Yet we have \$500 billion in unfunded state employee pension debt. Isn't that proof that the special interests are bankrupting our state?**

We all agree that there is too much partisan bickering and lack of action in Sacramento. And the dramatic increase in money spent on political campaigns has caused all of us to mistrust the political campaign system. But the sponsors of Prop 32 are trying to use our disappointment, anger and mistrust to change the rules to benefit only them.

Government watchdog groups and campaign finance reform advocates oppose this measure because it will do nothing to solve the problems in Sacramento and could make things worse by giving the wealthiest special interests even more power than they have now. In addition, this measure would create a whole new state bureaucracy to enforce the law, costing taxpayers more than a million dollars annually – even during a time when we are cutting vital state services.

**The unions have already poured millions of dollars into this initiative and will spend tens of millions more. Doesn't that alone prove the need to pass this initiative?**

Look carefully at who is funding Prop 32. The backers of this measure are former insurance company executives, Wall Street executives, developers, venture capitalists and big money donors to conservative causes who have tried unsuccessfully to pass this measure twice before in 1998 and 2005. Their sole aim is to cripple their opponents, and they carefully crafted the initiative to create special exemptions that will benefit them and their agenda.

While Prop 32 claims to be about stopping special interest money, it will actually do just the opposite – and will make things even worse in Sacramento. Corporations already spend 15-times as much as unions spend on political contributions, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. If this measure were to pass, it would effectively silence the voice of middle class Californians and unions while giving billionaire businessmen and corporate special interests free rein to exert even more influence over our political system, and that hurts all of us.

Some people say, 'I know this is unbalanced but it's a step forward.' Here's the problem with that. Restricting unions and their workers while doing nothing to stop corporate special interests from electing politicians that will be beholden to them will result in gutting air and water safety, rolling back worker rights and consumer protections.

**The previous “paycheck protection” initiatives were one-sided in that they solely targeted labor unions. Isn't this initiative even-handed, equally restricting contributions from both corporations and unions and prohibiting both corporations and unions from using payroll deduction?**

Prop 32 was carefully written by the billionaire businessmen and corporate special interests who placed it on the ballot to appear as if it impacts corporations and unions equally, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Prop 32 says it prohibits unions from using payroll-deducted funds for political purposes. It says it also applies to corporations, so it sounds balanced. But 99% of California corporations don't use payroll deductions and they would still be allowed to use their profits without restriction. That's not fair or balanced.

**You say this silences the voices of union members but it really gives them more say. How do you respond to that?**

Prop 32 makes it seem like it gives union members more of a say. The fact is current law already protects workers' rights. It is also important to remember that no one can be forced to join a union and contribute to politics. Nearly all unions allow members to opt out of contributions to political candidates. This measure makes it illegal to use payroll deductions to collect funding for any political contributions, even if union members specifically authorize those deductions in writing.

**It's OK with me to curb union power! Unions just take people's money, push for bloated pensions for public workers and give money to politicians who I don't even agree with. Do we really need them anymore?**

Someone has to protect working and middle class families in California, and that's not going to happen if all the power is in the hands of corporate special interests. From 1950 to 1980, when a

third of Americans were union members, incomes for working people more than doubled, creating the great American middle class. But since that time, as the percent of workers in unions has dropped, so have the incomes of average middle class families. That's not a coincidence. When CEOs write all the rules, with no one sitting across from them at the table negotiating fair wages and benefits for the people who work in their companies, the CEOs walk away with \$15 million compensation packages while workers walk away wondering how they're going to take care of their families. The lessons of the last 60 years are pretty clear: the working people of this state—whether they're cops or teachers, bricklayers or farmworkers—need a seat at the table if they're going to be able to put food on the table for their kids. Prop 32 would take away our seat at the table.

### **Why all the fear about this measure? Is it really any different than two other California “paycheck deception” measures that voters rejected?**

It's far more sophisticated, misleading and damaging. Prop 32 was carefully written by the billionaire businessmen and corporate special interests who placed it on the ballot to appear as if it impacts corporations and unions equally, but nothing could be further from the truth. This measure says it prohibits unions from using payroll-deducted funds for political purposes. It says it also applies to corporations, but 99% of California corporations don't use payroll deductions and they would still be allowed to use their profits without restriction. That's not fair or balanced.

The measure “prohibits unions and corporations from contributing directly or indirectly to candidates and candidate-controlled committees.” But it exempts Super-PACs, which can raise unlimited amounts of cash anonymously from corporate special interests and billionaire businessmen.

Corporations already outspend unions more than 15 to 1 on politics. Our communities are at risk when teachers can no longer advocate for students, nurses can't fight for patients and firefighters can't advocate for resources to keep our cities safe.

### **Why shouldn't my union should stay out of politics and focus on things like my contract and better representation?**

Remember, having a good contract alone isn't enough. Many of the basic rights we have as educators and union members, such as the right to collectively bargain a fair contract, the right to a hearing before being fired, workplace safety protections, and a secure retirement were won through us having and using our collective political power. The real intent of Prop 32 is to weaken unions and give even more power to corporate special interests. The other side understands how important the political process is to move their agenda – corporate special interests outspend unions 15 to 1. We can never match them dollar for dollar, but we can make a difference by standing together. This initiative would take away our ability to do that.

### **Aren't unions just afraid of losing clout in the Legislature?**

We all agree that there is too much partisan bickering and lack of action in Sacramento. And the dramatic increase in money spent on political campaigns has caused all of us to mistrust the political campaign system. But the sponsors of Prop 32 are trying to use our disappointment, anger and mistrust to change the rules to benefit only them.

Prop 32 is not about stopping special interest money in elections, as it was intentionally written to create special exemptions for corporate special interests and billionaire businessmen, giving them even more political power to write their own set of rules. It exempts secretive Super PACs, which can raise unlimited amounts of money from corporate special interests and billionaires to support their candidates or defeat their opponents. And it does nothing to stop anonymous donors from influencing elections.

Restricting workers and their unions while not stopping corporate special interests will result in a political system that favors corporate special interests over everyone else. If you don't want special interests in control of air and water safety and consumer protections, vote No on Prop 32.

**I get that this measure impacts unions, but how would Prop 32 impact me personally? I can still contribute to whichever candidates I want to support, right?**

Prop 32 does not restrict your individual right to make a political contribution, but many of the basic rights we have as union members, such as the right to collectively bargain a fair contract, the right to a hearing before being fired, workplace safety protections, and a secure retirement were won through us having and using our collective political power. The real intent of Prop 32 is to weaken unions and give even more power to corporate special interests. This initiative is sponsored by anti-union millionaires who want to privatize our public schools and who want to first take away working people's ability to have a voice in the political process. Then they will come back after our basic rights – like collective bargaining, healthcare and pensions. It's the first blow of a one-two punch.