

Meeting date *

MM DD YYYY

12 / 08 / 2020

Agenda item

Adopt Ordinance Amending Various Sections Within Chapter 2.115 Related To Election Campaign Contribution Limits And Deleting Articles 5 And 6 Related To Public Finance Of Elections

Agenda item number

39

What social justice issue(s) does this fall under?

- Equitable Housing
- Criminal Justice Reform
- Education Equity
- Health Equity
- Environmental Justice
- Inclusive Economic Development
- Transparency & Accountability
- Other:

Tell us what happened. Are there important next steps that were discussed? Be sure to use your own words, as if you are explaining this meeting to a friend. *

The Sacramento County Sheriff, Scott Jones & District Attorney, Anne Marie Schubert sat in front of the City Council and advocated for an ordinance that would create insanely high campaign contribution limits. They want individuals or organizations to be able to give them \$25,000 for their elections. When was the last time your neighbor or friend forked over \$25,000 for a campaign? This amount encourages people with deep pockets to

neighbor or friend forked over \$25,000 for a campaign? This amount encourages people with deep pockets to support public officials that will benefit them. Of course, \$25,000 is a lot to the average person, but when you compare it to the limits set by the state as well as similar and even larger counties, it's just crazy. For example, Los Angeles County has a limit of \$1,500 for contributions.

The justification given by the Sherrif & DA for requesting this amount was that it would bring more transparency. They believe that donors will donate directly to their campaigns instead of using Independent Expenditures or "IE". Essentially IEs are things like ads, flyers, or other media which do not have spending limits. Think about how many political commercials you see during an election season. Many are funded as independent expenditures and those are not going away. So really, this \$25,000 amount gives rich people the chance to not only fund their chosen candidate through IE but also give a large sum directly to their campaign. More opportunities for big donors does not lead to more transparency. A few wealthy people should not be determining which candidates we see and hear from the most, and ultimately who gets elected.

The supervisors voted to reject the ordinance and instead let state law determine the amount. Assembly Bill (AB) 571 created laws around campaign contributions. Currently, under that Bill, county officials can not receive more than \$4,900 from an individual or organization. This law will go into effect on January 1st 2021, but the Board of Supervisors can create their own ordinance at any time with different amounts. The Board decided they would further review AB 571 laws and decide if they would create their own ordinance next year. For instance, they could adopt a similar ordinance to Los Angeles and set the limit to \$1,500. But if they do adopt a new ordinance, another regulatory body will need to oversee that it's being followed which will cost more money.

Why is this important for social justice? What do you want SJPC readers to do or think about after reading your report back? *

This issue is critically important for social justice because ordinances like this could make elected officials less accountable to the public they serve. Low contribution limits ensure that public officials are not heavily reliant on wealthy donors or special interest groups. If candidates and incumbents like Schubert & Jones can rely on law enforcement associations to bankroll their campaigns, building grassroots community support sure won't be their main focus; neither of them stated that more money would help them reach underserved communities. This is very concerning since they both have a lot of power over the lives of Sacramentens, and if they would rather spend their time advocating for their ability to cozy up to more big donors than spend it advocating for more community-based safety solutions, it really makes you question, whose side are they really on?

Was there a vote?

Yes

No

Other:

Who were the voting members, and how did they vote?

	Yes	No	Abstain	NA
Serna	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kennedy	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desmond	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frost	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nottoli	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What was the result of the vote?

Frost was initially in favor of the ordinance, Serna/Kennedy/Nottoli were not in favor, Peters did not specify. Ultimately, there was a motion to reject the staff's recommendation, adopt the AB 571 limits, and not move forward with adopting a county ordinance, which was unanimously approved.

Quotes/Other things that stuck out to you/Random thoughts...

"No more legalizing bribery; this will make it more swampy." (LOL) "Large contributions damage public trust."
"Elected incumbents like Jones and Schubert have long maintained staying power thanks to, wealthy corporate benefactors, which include law enforcement associations at the local, state & national level."