



To: RCRC Board of Directors
From: Paul A. Smith, Vice President Governmental Affairs
Date: April 17, 2017
Re: Senate Bill 691 (Lara) & Senate Constitutional Amendment 11 (Lara) - Partisan Local Offices – **ACTION**

Summary

This memo provides an analysis on Senate Bill 691 (Lara) and Senate Constitutional Amendment 11 (Lara) dealing with partisan local offices. RCRC staff is recommending that the Board of Directors adopt an “Oppose” position on both of these measures.

Background

Under the California Constitution, elected offices for cities, counties, schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and judicial offices are non-partisan. According to the National Association of Counties (NACo), the number of states where counties hold non-partisan elections has risen since 1991. The last survey conducted in 2008 showed that the number of states with all non-partisan local offices had increased from six to eight, and the number of states with a mixture of partisan and non-partisan counties had risen from five to eight. However, it should be noted that 33 states have partisan elections at the local level.

Issue

SB 691, introduced by Senator Ricardo Lara (D-Long Beach), would require candidates for an elected office in a local agency to disclose or decline to disclose their party preference. SB 691 authorizes a candidate to include their party preference, membership, or activity in partisan political organizations in their candidate statement. In addition, SB 691 requires ballots for an elected office in a local agency to include a candidate's party preference. Senator Lara also introduced SCA 11 to implement the provisions of SB 691, as a change in the State's Constitution is needed to allow candidates for locally-elected offices to be partisan offices. Depending on the timing of the passage of SCA 11 (a 2/3rds vote is needed), it could appear on either the June 2018 Direct Primary Election or the November 2018 General Election.

Staff Recommendation

RCRC staff is recommending that the Board of Directors adopt an “Oppose” position on both SB 691 and SCA 11. These measures would fundamentally change the tone of County Boards of Supervisors as it changes the designations of these offices from non-partisan to partisan. Counties, along with other locally-elected offices, have operated as

non-partisan bodies for several decades, and it is generally agreed that government at this level has worked well under this model.

Attachments

- Copy of SB 691 (Lara)
- Copy of SCA 11 (Lara)