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AB-571 Political Reform Act of 1974: contribution limits. (2019-2020)

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Assembly Bill No. 571

CHAPTER 556

An act to amend and repeal Sections 10003 and 10202 of the Elections Code, and to amend Section 85301 of, to amend, repeal, and add Sections 85305, 85306, 85307, 85315, 85316, 85317, and 85318 of, and to add Section 85702.5 to, the Government Code, relating to the Political Reform Act of 1974.

[Approved by Governor October 08, 2019. Filed with Secretary of State October 08, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 571, Mullin. Political Reform Act of 1974: contribution limits.

The Political Reform Act of 1974 prohibits a person, other than a small contributor committee or political party committee, from making to a candidate for elective state office, for statewide elective office, or for the office of Governor, and prohibits those candidates from accepting from a person, a contribution totaling more than a specified amount per election. For a candidate for elective state office other than a candidate for statewide elective office, the limitation on contributions is \$3,000 per election, as that amount is adjusted by the Fair Political Practices Commission in January of every odd-numbered year.

Existing law authorizes a county, city, or district to limit campaign contributions in local elections. Existing law authorizes the governing board of a school district or of a community college district to limit campaign expenditures or contributions in elections to district offices. The act specifies that it does not prevent the Legislature or any other state or local agency from imposing additional requirements on a person if the requirements do not prevent the person from complying with the act, and that the act does not nullify contribution limitations or prohibitions by any local jurisdiction that apply to elections for local elective office, as specified.

This bill, commencing January 1, 2021, instead would prohibit a person from making to a candidate for elective county or city office, and would prohibit a candidate for elective county or city office from accepting from a person, a contribution totaling more than the amount set forth in the act for limitations on contributions to a candidate for elective state office. This bill would also authorize a county or city to impose a limitation that is different from the limitation imposed by this bill. This bill would make specified provisions of the act relating to contribution limitations applicable to a candidate for a elective county or city office, except as specified.

The act makes a violation of its provisions punishable as a misdemeanor and subject to specified penalties.

This bill would add the contribution limitation imposed by the bill to the act's provisions, thereby making a violation of the limitation punishable as a misdemeanor and subject to specified penalties. However, the bill would specify that a violation of a limitation imposed by a local government is not subject to the act's enforcement provisions. The bill would authorize a local government that imposes a limitation that is different from the limitation imposed by this bill to adopt enforcement standards for a violation of the limitation imposed by the local government agency, including administrative, civil, or criminal penalties. By expanding the

scope of an existing crime with regard to a violation of a contribution limitation imposed by the bill, the 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.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Most states impose limitations on contributions to candidates for elective county and city offices. California is among the minority of states without these contribution limitations.

(b) Most counties and cities in this state have not independently imposed limitations on contributions to candidates for elective offices in those jurisdictions.

(c) In counties and cities in this state that have not imposed limitations on contributions, candidates for elective offices in those jurisdictions often receive contributions that would exceed the limitations for a state Senate campaign, even though most counties and cities contain far fewer people than the average state Senate district.

(d) In counties and cities in this state that have not imposed limitations on contributions, candidates for elective office in those jurisdictions sometimes raise 40 percent or more of their total campaign funds from a single contributor.

(e) A system allowing unlimited contributions to a candidate for elective county or city office creates the risk and the perception that elected officials in those jurisdictions are beholden to their contributors and will act in the best interest of those contributors at the expense of the people.

(f) This state has a statewide interest in preventing actual corruption and the appearance of corruption at all levels of government.

(g) This act establishes a limitation on contributions to a candidate for elective office in a city or county in which the local government has not established a limitation. However, a local government may establish a different limitation that is more precisely tailored to the needs of its communities.

SEC. 2. Section 10003 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

10003. (a) A county may by ordinance or resolution limit campaign contributions in county elections.

(b) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 3. Section 10202 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

10202. (a) A city may, by ordinance or resolution, limit campaign contributions in municipal elections.

(b) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 4. Section 85301 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85301. (a) A person, other than a small contributor committee or political party committee, shall not make to a candidate for elective state office other than a candidate for statewide elective office, and a candidate for elective state office other than a candidate for statewide elective office shall not accept from a person, a contribution totaling more than three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per election.

(b) Except to a candidate for Governor, a person, other than a small contributor committee or political party committee, shall not make to a candidate for statewide elective office, and except a candidate for Governor, a candidate for statewide elective office

shall not accept from a person other than a small contributor committee or a political party committee, a contribution totaling more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per election.

(c) A person, other than a small contributor committee or political party committee, shall not make to a candidate for Governor, and a candidate for Governor shall not accept from any person other than a small contributor committee or political party committee, a contribution totaling more than twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) per election.

(d) (1) A person shall not make to a candidate for elective county or city office, and a candidate for elective county or city office shall not accept from a person, a contribution totaling more than the amount set forth in subdivision (a) per election, as that amount is adjusted by the Commission pursuant to Section 83124. This subdivision does not apply in a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(2) This subdivision shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

(e) The provisions of this section do not apply to a candidate's contributions of the candidate's personal funds to the candidate's own campaign.

SEC. 5. Section 85305 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85305. (a) A candidate for elective state office or committee controlled by that candidate shall not make any contribution to any other candidate for elective state office in excess of the limits set forth in subdivision (a) of Section 85301.

(b) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 6. Section 85305 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85305. (a) A candidate for elective state, county, or city office or committee controlled by that candidate shall not make a contribution to any other candidate for elective state, county, or city office in excess of the limits set forth in subdivision (a) of Section 85301. This section does not apply in a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(b) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

SEC. 7. Section 85306 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85306. (a) A candidate may transfer campaign funds from one controlled committee to a controlled committee for elective state office of the same candidate. Contributions transferred shall be attributed to specific contributors using a "last in, first out" or "first in, first out" accounting method, and these attributed contributions when aggregated with all other contributions from the same contributor may not exceed the limits set forth in Section 85301 or 85302.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a candidate for elective state office, other than a candidate for statewide elective office, who possesses campaign funds on January 1, 2001, may use those funds to seek elective office without attributing the funds to specific contributors.

(c) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a candidate for statewide elective office who possesses campaign funds on November 6, 2002, may use those funds to seek elective office without attributing the funds to specific contributors.

(d) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 8. Section 85306 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85306. (a) A candidate may transfer campaign funds from one controlled committee to a controlled committee for elective state, county, or city office of the same candidate. Contributions transferred shall be attributed to specific contributors using a "last in, first out" or "first in, first out" accounting method, and these attributed contributions when aggregated with all other contributions from the same contributor shall not exceed the limits set forth in Section 85301 or 85302.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a candidate for elective state office, other than a candidate for statewide elective office, who possesses campaign funds on January 1, 2001, may use those funds to seek elective office without attributing the funds to specific contributors.

(c) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a candidate for statewide elective office who possesses campaign funds on November 6, 2002, may use those funds to seek elective office without attributing the funds to specific contributors.

(d) This section does not apply in a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(e) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

SEC. 9. Section 85307 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85307. (a) The provisions of this article regarding loans apply to extensions of credit, but do not apply to loans made to a candidate by a commercial lending institution in the lender's regular course of business on terms available to members of the general public for which the candidate is personally liable.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a candidate for elective state office shall not personally loan to the candidate's campaign, including the proceeds of a loan obtained by the candidate from a commercial lending institution, an amount, the outstanding balance of which exceeds one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). A candidate shall not charge interest on any loan the candidate made to the candidate's campaign.

(c) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 10. Section 85307 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85307. (a) The provisions of this article regarding loans apply to extensions of credit, but do not apply to loans made to a candidate by a commercial lending institution in the lender's regular course of business on terms available to members of the general public for which the candidate is personally liable.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a candidate for elective state, county, or city office shall not personally loan to the candidate's campaign, including the proceeds of a loan obtained by the candidate from a commercial lending institution, an amount, the outstanding balance of which exceeds one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). A candidate shall not charge interest on any loan the candidate made to the candidate's campaign. This subdivision does not apply to a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(c) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

SEC. 11. Section 85315 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85315. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, an elected state officer may establish a committee to oppose the qualification of a recall measure, and the recall election. This committee may be established when the elected state officer receives a notice of intent to recall pursuant to Section 11021 of the Elections Code. An elected state officer may accept campaign contributions to oppose the qualification of a recall measure, and if qualification is successful, the recall election, without regard to the campaign contributions limits set forth in this chapter. The voluntary expenditure limits do not apply to expenditures made to oppose the qualification of a recall measure or to oppose the recall election.

(b) After the failure of a recall petition or after the recall election, the committee formed by the elected state officer shall wind down its activities and dissolve. Any remaining funds shall be treated as surplus funds and shall be expended within 30 days after the failure of the recall petition or after the recall election for a purpose specified in subdivision (b) of Section 89519.

(c) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 12. Section 85315 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85315. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, an elected state, county, or city officer may establish a committee to oppose the qualification of a recall measure, and the recall election. This committee may be established when the elected state, county, or city officer receives a notice of intent to recall pursuant to Section 11021 of the Elections Code. An elected state, county, or city officer may accept campaign contributions to oppose the qualification of a recall measure, and if qualification is successful, the recall election, without regard to the campaign contribution limits set forth in this chapter. The voluntary expenditure limits do not apply to expenditures made to oppose the qualification of a recall measure or to oppose the recall election.

(b) After the failure of a recall petition or after the recall election, the committee formed by the elected state, county, or city officer shall wind down its activities and dissolve. Any remaining funds shall be treated as surplus funds and shall be expended within 30 days after the failure of the recall petition or after the recall election for a purpose specified in subdivision (b) of Section 89519.

(c) This section does not apply in a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(d) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

SEC. 13. Section 85316 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85316. (a) Except as provided in subdivision (b), a contribution for an election may be accepted by a candidate for elective state office after the date of the election only to the extent that the contribution does not exceed net debts outstanding from the election, and the contribution does not otherwise exceed the applicable contribution limit for that election.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), an elected state officer may accept contributions after the date of the election for the purpose of paying expenses associated with holding the office provided that the contributions are not expended for any contribution to any state or local committee. Contributions received pursuant to this subdivision shall be deposited into a bank account established solely for the purposes specified in this subdivision.

(1) A person shall not make, and an elected state officer shall not receive from a person, a contribution pursuant to this subdivision totaling more than the following amounts per calendar year:

(A) Three thousand dollars (\$3,000) in the case of an elected state officer of the Assembly or Senate.

(B) Five thousand dollars (\$5,000) in the case of a statewide elected state officer other than the Governor.

(C) Twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) in the case of the Governor.

(2) An elected state officer shall not receive contributions pursuant to paragraph (1) that, in the aggregate, total more than the following amounts per calendar year:

(A) Fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in the case of an elected state officer of the Assembly or Senate.

(B) One hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in the case of a statewide elected state officer other than the Governor.

(C) Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) in the case of the Governor.

(3) Any contribution received pursuant to this subdivision shall be deemed to be a contribution to that candidate for election to any state office that the candidate may seek during the term of office to which the candidate is currently elected, including, but not limited to, reelection to the office the candidate currently holds, and shall be subject to any applicable contribution limit provided in this title. If a contribution received pursuant to this subdivision exceeds the allowable contribution limit for the office sought, the candidate shall return the amount exceeding the limit to the contributor on a basis to be determined by the Commission. None of the expenditures made by elected state officers pursuant to this subdivision shall be subject to the voluntary expenditure limitations in Section 85400.

(4) The Commission shall adjust the calendar year contribution limitations and aggregate contribution limitations set forth in this subdivision in January of every odd-numbered year to reflect any increase or decrease in the Consumer Price Index. Those adjustments shall be rounded to the nearest one hundred dollars (\$100).

(c) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 14. Section 85316 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85316. (a) Except as provided in subdivision (b), a contribution for an election may be accepted by a candidate for elective state, county, or city office after the date of the election only to the extent that the contribution does not exceed net debts outstanding from the election, and the contribution does not otherwise exceed the applicable contribution limit for that election.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), an elected state officer may accept contributions after the date of the election for the purpose of paying expenses associated with holding the office provided that the contributions are not expended for any contribution to any state or local committee. Contributions received pursuant to this subdivision shall be deposited into a bank account established solely for the purposes specified in this subdivision.

(1) A person shall not make, and an elected state officer shall not receive from a person, a contribution pursuant to this subdivision totaling more than the following amounts per calendar year:

(A) Three thousand dollars (\$3,000) in the case of an elected state officer of the Assembly or Senate.

(B) Five thousand dollars (\$5,000) in the case of a statewide elected state officer other than the Governor.

(C) Twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) in the case of the Governor.

(2) An elected state officer shall not receive contributions pursuant to paragraph (1) that, in the aggregate, total more than the following amounts per calendar year:

(A) Fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in the case of an elected state officer of the Assembly or Senate.

(B) One hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in the case of a statewide elected state officer other than the Governor.

(C) Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) in the case of the Governor.

(3) Any contribution received pursuant to this subdivision shall be deemed to be a contribution to that candidate for election to any state office that the candidate may seek during the term of office to which the candidate is currently elected, including, but not limited to, reelection to the office the candidate currently holds, and shall be subject to any applicable contribution limit provided in this title. If a contribution received pursuant to this subdivision exceeds the allowable contribution limit for the office sought, the candidate shall return the amount exceeding the limit to the contributor on a basis to be determined by the Commission. The expenditures made by elected state officers pursuant to this subdivision shall not be subject to the voluntary expenditure limitations in Section 85400.

(4) The Commission shall adjust the calendar year contribution limitations and aggregate contribution limitations set forth in this subdivision in January of every odd-numbered year to reflect any increase or decrease in the Consumer Price Index. Those adjustments shall be rounded to the nearest one hundred dollars (\$100).

(c) This section does not apply in a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(d) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

SEC. 15. Section 85317 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85317. (a) Notwithstanding subdivision (a) of Section 85306, a candidate for elective state office may carry over contributions raised in connection with one election for elective state office to pay campaign expenditures incurred in connection with a subsequent election for the same elective state office.

(b) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 16. Section 85317 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85317. (a) Notwithstanding subdivision (a) of Section 85306, a candidate for elective state, county, or city office may carry over contributions raised in connection with one election for elective state, county, or city office to pay campaign expenditures incurred in connection with a subsequent election for the same elective state, county, or city office. This section does not apply in a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(b) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

SEC. 17. Section 85318 of the Government Code is amended to read:

85318. (a) A candidate for elective state office may raise contributions for a general election before the primary election, and for a special general election before a special primary election, for the same elective state office if the candidate sets aside these contributions and uses these contributions for the general election or special general election. If the candidate for elective state office is defeated in the primary election or special primary election, or otherwise withdraws from the general election or special general election, the general election or special general election funds shall be refunded to the contributors on a pro rata basis less any expenses associated with the raising and administration of general election or special general election contributions. Notwithstanding Section 85201, candidates for elective state office may establish separate campaign contribution accounts for the primary and general elections or special primary and special general elections.

(b) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 18. Section 85318 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85318. (a) A candidate for elective state, county, or city office may raise contributions for a general election before the primary election, and for a special general election before a special primary election, for the same elective state, county, or city office if the

candidate sets aside these contributions and uses these contributions for the general election or special general election. If the candidate for elective state, county, or city office is defeated in the primary election or special primary election, or otherwise withdraws from the general election or special general election, the general election or special general election funds shall be refunded to the contributors on a pro rata basis less any expenses associated with the raising and administration of general election or special general election contributions. Notwithstanding Section 85201, candidates for elective state, county, or city office may establish separate campaign contribution accounts for the primary and general elections or special primary and special general elections.

(b) This section does not apply in a jurisdiction in which the county or city imposes a limit on contributions pursuant to Section 85702.5.

(c) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021.

SEC. 19. Section 85702.5 is added to the Government Code, to read:

85702.5. (a) A county or city may, by ordinance or resolution, impose a limit on contributions to a candidate for elective county or city office that is different from the limit set forth in subdivision (d) of Section 85301. The limitation may also be imposed by means of a county or city initiative measure.

(b) A county or city that establishes a contribution limit pursuant to subdivision (a) may adopt enforcement standards for a violation of that limit, which may include administrative, civil, or criminal penalties.

(c) The Commission is not responsible for the administration or enforcement of a contribution limit adopted pursuant to subdivision (a).

(d) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2021. A county or city's limit on contributions to a candidate for elective county or city office that is in effect on the operative date of this section shall be deemed to be a limit imposed pursuant to subdivision (a).

SEC. 20. 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. 21. 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.