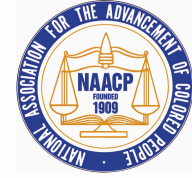




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League of Women Voters of California, AARP, California Common Cause and CA NAACP Slam Politicians' Scheme to Seize Power from Voters and Avoid Accountability

Groups vow vigorous fight against politician power grab

Sacramento - Several prominent non-profit and good government groups announced today that they will vigorously fight a scheme being pushed by incumbent politicians to overturn voter-approved Proposition 11 and seize power from voters by disbanding the Citizens Redistricting Commission. The politicians' measure to repeal Prop. 11 will allow legislators to draw their own election districts so they can continue to guarantee their own reelections and avoid any accountability for solving California's staggering problems like record unemployment, lack of funding for education and social services, and the state's appalling budget deficit. AARP, the League of Women Voters of California, California Common Cause and the California State Conference of the NAACP all supported passage of Prop. 11 and will fight the effort to gut the good government reform.

"It is truly disturbing that while Californians suffer due to decades of mismanagement, the same politicians who got us into this mess continue their unrelenting quest for more power and less accountability," said Jeannine English, California President of AARP. "We are committed to defeating the politicians' blatant attempt to skirt their responsibility to voters just so they can protect their power and their special interest friends."

Supporters of the so-called "Financial Accountability in Redistricting Act," which would repeal Prop. 11, want to fool voters into believing their measure is about cost or "fairness" to voters. But a closer look and news reports reveal the actual sponsors of the measure are Congressman Howard Berman and his brother, a redistricting consultant who has gotten rich by drawing election districts to protect incumbent politicians. And, campaign finance reports show that most of the measure's funders are legislators and congressional representatives, who have just been joined by a businessman with a long history of political contributions to Berman and others who poured \$2 million into the committee working to qualify the measure for the November 2010 ballot.

"California politicians persist in playing political games instead of solving our problems, while the state crumbles around their feet," said Janis R. Hirohama, President of the League of Women Voters of

California. “Politicians need to give up this cynical and self-serving effort to gut Prop. 11 and get serious about doing their jobs.”

Polling shows that voters are fed up with politicians’ unwillingness or inability to do their jobs. Congress and the state legislature are experiencing their highest disapproval ratings in history, with over 75 percent of voters disapproving of the job Congress is doing and 85 percent of likely California voters disapproving of the state legislature. And, recent polling on the measure to repeal Prop. 11 demonstrates that voters are not willing to give any more power to the politicians they believe are failing them.

A recent statewide survey among likely voters found that only 35 percent of voters would support the initiative to gut the independent Citizens Redistricting Commission approved by voters in 2008, versus 46 percent who said they would oppose it. After hearing a short description of the measure, support plummets to 20 percent and opposition grows to 71 percent.

“It is not surprising that politicians would be eager to draw their own political districts to protect their own careers. Given the polling that shows the Berman initiative is polling at only 35% on title and summary reading, it is clear that voters are committed to creating a citizens redistricting commission that will draw lines that reflect community interests, not self interests,” said Kathay Feng, Executive Director of California Common Cause.

Voters approved Proposition 11 because they were angered over the obvious self-interest of legislators drawing their own districts to virtually guarantee their own reelection. Californians’ ongoing commitment to implementing Prop. 11 is clearly demonstrated by the over 30,000 applications submitted for the Citizens Redistricting Commission. When formed, the commission will represent the diversity of California, conduct redistricting in an open and transparent manner, and help ensure fair elections throughout the state.

“Voters have shown they want to have a voice through the Citizens Redistricting Commission. Safeguards in Proposition 11 and in the commission regulations, including transparency, will ensure the redistricting commission and process fairly represent all Californians,” said Alice Huffman, President of the California State Conference of the NAACP. Ms. Huffman’s outreach and education efforts were instrumental in ensuring African Americans have been well-represented in the commission application process, resulting in 8.3 percent of applications being submitted African Americans, higher than their 6 percent share of California’s population. “Politicians will work to fool voters into believing otherwise, but it’s clear they only want to overturn Prop. 11 so they can return to the days of back room deals that benefit only the politicians, not the voters. Voters are just not going to buy it.”

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