



MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

September 9, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for SB 1243 (Dodd)—Campaign contributions: agency officers

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach (City), I urge your signature on SB 1243. This bill would raise the threshold for contributions regulated by the Levine Act from \$250 to \$500. The measure would also extend the time allowed to cure certain violations by returning a contribution from 14 days to 30 days.

In 1982, the Legislature passed and Governor Brown signed AB 1040, also known as the Levine Act, which prohibited an elected or appointed officer, alternate, or candidate for office who serves on a specific quasi-judicial board or commission from accepting, soliciting, or directing a contribution of more than \$250 from any person or their agent who has an application for a license, permit, or other entitlement for use pending before the body. As originally enacted, the Levine Act's restrictions only applied to members of appointed boards and commissions, excluding city councilmembers and county supervisors in their elected roles. This changed on January 1, 2023, as a result of SB 1439 (Glazer), which expanded the reach of the Levine Act to local elected officials such as city councilmembers, special district board members, and school board members even when acting in their elected roles.

The \$250 contribution limit set in 1982 has not been adjusted for 42 years. According to an inflation calculator operated by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, when adjusted for inflation, \$250 in 1982 has approximately the same purchasing power as about \$800 today. SB 1243 raises the contribution threshold of the Levine Act to \$500. Furthermore, the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) recently issued an opinion finding that contracts for sponsorships are subject to the Levine Act. Complying with the Levine Act poses an administrative and logistical burden, particularly for Councilmember sponsorships outside of the City (e.g., to nonprofits, community organizations, special events hosted by private parties), as the threshold for Levine Act disclosures is considerably low. In addition, there is no software system specifically designed to assist in tracking and cross-referencing contributions that meet the threshold against agenda items with Levine Act implications. This creates a cumbersome administrative process of manually cross-referencing 20 contribution accounts belonging to the Mayor and Councilmembers – 10 officeholder accounts and 10 campaign accounts – against an average of 230 Levine Act items on City Council agendas annually. SB 1243 would reduce implementation challenges presented by the Levine Act that divert resources away from community organizations and programming that benefit Long Beach.

Under existing law, if an officer accepts, solicits, or directs a contribution over the contribution limit prescribed by the Levine Act 12 months after the date a final decision is rendered, the officer has 14 days to cure the violation by returning the contribution, or the portion of the contribution in excess of the contribution limit. SB 1243 extends that period to 30 days, allowing enough time for local officials to identify and correct an unintentional contribution without being penalized.

The City supports legislation that improves transparency around acts of misconduct to improve public trust. As an example, the Office of Ethics (OET) was established in FY 24 to bring the ethics program and the Public Records Act program together under one office to centralize operations, enhance public trust, and empower informed action. This unified approach fosters synergy between ethical conduct and open access to information, allowing for more transparent decision-making and robust oversight. The foundation of the OET is built on the City's [Code of Conduct and Ethics](#). SB 1243 will help ensure the City operates ethically while preserving public trust and confidence.

For these reasons, the City requests your signature on SB 1243.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Rex Richardson
City of Long Beach

cc: The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, State Senate, 33rd District
The Honorable Mike Gipson, State Assembly, 65th District
The Honorable Josh Lowenthal, State Assembly, 69th District