Questions & Answers about Proposition 25

Q: Proposition 25. Isn’t that the campaign finance reform initiative?
A: Well, it would impact the financing of campaigns. Whether it would make things better or worse is another question entirely.

Q: But campaign financing is a mess. We need to do something.
A: In this case, the cure would be worse than the disease. In its single-spaced, 24 pages, Prop. 25 has some good ideas. But on the whole, it would only add to the abuses and hit taxpayers with a more than $55 million annual tax increase.

Q: That doesn’t make sense. If we are curbing campaign spending, how can taxpayers be hit with the bill?
A: Because at the center of Prop. 25 is taxpayer financing of political advertising. That’s why groups like the California Taxpayers’ Association oppose Prop. 25. It forces Californians to subsidize political ads — even those with which they disagree! And this is no voluntary check-off on your tax form. It is a new mandated taxpayer expense that means raising taxes or cuts in education or other services.

Q: Don’t they have this in other parts of the country?
A: Prop. 25 would take California where no other state has gone before. It requires taxpayer financing for advertising for initiative campaigns. No other state has gone that far. That’s one reason why groups such as the League of Women Voters, who support public financing for candidates, oppose Prop. 25 — they don’t think taxpayers should finance California’s initiative process.

Q: But at least Prop. 25 would bring a level playing field, making all candidates live under the same contribution limits.
A: Not so fast. Everyone, but one special category of candidate: the very category in which you’ll find Prop. 25’s sponsor, Ron Unz. Millionaire candidates like Unz are exempted from Prop. 25’s contribution limits. That would make politics even more of a rich man’s game, giving wealthy people and incumbents an even greater advantage.

Q: But don’t we need to do something? Look at the federal system: special interests flood the system with what they call “soft money” and Congress won’t do anything to stop it!
A: Prop. 25 takes the federal system and does it one better! It has a soft money loophole so big you could drive a Brinks truck through it! Worse, unlike the federal soft money loophole, Prop. 25 would literally write it into state law. Even Common Cause acknowledged in the San Francisco Chronicle and other publications that Prop. 25 has “a huge soft money loophole. It still allows unlimited contributions to parties.”

Q: So who is opposing Prop. 25?
A: The League of Women Voters of California, California Taxpayers’ Association, Congress of California Seniors, Responsible Voters for Lower Taxes, California Teachers Association, Former Chairs of the California Fair Political Practices Commission Daniel Lowenstein and Ben Davidian, California Chamber of Commerce, Consumer Federation of California, labor, Democrats, Republicans, independents and everyday Californians who want a fair and level playing field.

Q: Alright then, who is financing your effort to defeat Prop. 25?
A: Currently, the Steering Committee of the campaign is made up of representatives from the California Chamber of Commerce, California Teachers Association, California Manufacturers Association, California Labor Federation, SEIU and the California Business Roundtable. We’re hoping to reach out to as many other people as possible so that we can effectively get the message out to voters that Prop. 25 is a cure worse than the disease. Instead of cleaning up California’s political system, Prop. 25 would add to the abuses and leave taxpayers footing a more than $55 million annual bill.

12/23/99