



Paycheck Deception Ballot Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What does the initiative propose exactly?

A. The measure, tentatively titled the “Stop Special Interest Money Now Act,” is designed to keep unions from using dues money paid through automatic payroll deductions for political contributions. Unions already must get permission from members when they first sign up in order to use such money politically. This measure would force them to seek authorization from members every year.

Q2. What’s wrong with that?

A. The initiative creates a new set of rules that deliberately makes it almost impossible for workers to make voluntary political contributions to compete with corporate power and money. It permits voluntary contributions to a union’s political committee--but only if the employee provides annual written consent to the union and the funds are not collected by payroll deduction. It takes away workers’ rights to make voluntary political contributions and pool union money together so we can have a strong voice in political decisions that affect our jobs, families and communities. It imposes strict restrictions on the dues money that union members contribute to political action committees--but it places no restrictions at all on corporate political action committees.

Q3. Does the initiative’s language reference unions only?

A. No, it deceptively invokes corporations. It prohibits labor unions and corporations from making political contributions to nonfederal candidates in California, if that money is collected from employee or member payroll deduction. Problem is, most corporations don’t collect political contribution money from employees’ paychecks in the first place! So they would still be permitted to make independent expenditure contributions using corporate profits. So would nonprofits and, in fact, just about any organization except unions. Thus labor unions would be disadvantaged, given that very few corporations do any payroll deductions for politics.

Q4. Could unions still contribute to political causes somehow?

A. To compete with corporations in the making of independent expenditures and ballot measure contributions, a union would have to create a political action committee funded by voluntary

contributions from members through a system that did not involve payroll deduction and whose members would have to provide to the union at least once each year written consent.

Q5. In other words, if the initiative becomes law, there would be a double standard in terms of unions’ ability to fund PACs vs. corporations?

A. Exactly. Here’s a chart which helps illustrate how the proposed initiative favors corporations over labor unions.

	Candidate Contributions Prohibited	Independent Expenditures Prohibited	Ballot Measure Contributions Prohibited	Require Yearly Written Consent of Members to use Funds for politics
Labor Union General Funds	Yes	Yes, if payroll deduction used	Yes, if payroll deduction used	Yes
Labor Union PAC	Yes	Yes, if payroll deduction used	Yes, if payroll deduction used	Yes
Corporation General Funds	Yes	No	No	No
Corporation PAC	No	No	No	No

Q6. Where can I read the full text of the initiative?

A. Go to http://ag.ca.gov/cms_attachments/initiatives/pdfs/i941_initiative_11-0010.pdf

Q7. Couldn’t it be argued that passage of this initiative could have the beneficial impact of leveling the playing field?

A. Recently, well-funded individuals and business concerns have put up millions of dollars and have spoken vehemently--and inaccurately—to support new laws against public employees in efforts to cripple their power. Wisconsin’s battles were due in large part to a conservative initiative to destroy that state’s public employee unions; the much-heralded goal of budget savings was in fact only part of the rationale. In California last year, Meg Whitman vowed to eliminate up to 40,000 state jobs. The “paycheck deception” initiative is part of the same attempt to eliminate public employee unions. Public employee unions seek fair working conditions and compensation for their members.

Q8. Who’s backing the initiative?

A. The initiative is funded by oil and real estate interests, wealthy investors, and CEOs—that is, billionaires and big businesses who want to limit public employee unions and to silence the voices of teachers, nurses, firefighters, and other working people.

Q9. Has this type of ballot initiative been tried before?

A. Yes, it's similar to Propositions 75 and 226, which a coalition of community groups and unions successfully fought in 2005 and 1998 respectively. Progressive coalitions spent an estimated \$30 million defeating these initiatives, and defeat of this Paycheck Deception measure could cost \$50 million or more, if it gets on the ballot. You can learn more about the history of Props. 75 and 226 at http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/California_Proposition_75,_Permission_Required_to_Withhold_Dues_for_Political_Purposes_%282005%29

Q10. What are unions doing to defeat this initiative?

A. In order to qualify this initiative for the ballot, the proponents of the initiative must gather 504,742 valid signatures by October 24, 2011. In order to meet the required number of valid signatures and ensure qualification, it is estimated that they must gather over one million signatures. The proposed plan to defeat this measure is to keep the proponents from qualifying the “Paycheck Deception” initiative for the 2012 ballot. A big component of the plan is voter education during the signature-gathering phase, conducted as much as possible at the sites where signatures are being gathered. To know where those sites are, we need to engage our members and allies to be eyes and ears in the field.

Q11. What should I do if I see people gathering signatures in favor of this initiative?

A. Call SEIU California State Council at (877) 440-9585 to report where signature gathering is taking place.

Q12. What happens after I call that number to give information?

A. Logistics permitting, State Council will send out one or more trained, well-informed activists to the site to inform potential signers of the truth about the petition. Their purpose is to provide voter education, giving voters both sides of the story and helping them understand who's behind the initiative so that they can make an informed choice. We believe that they will reject this initiative when they hear the truth about it and who's behind it.

Q13. What are some other things I can do to help defeat this initiative?

A. Talk to your family, friends and neighbors to educate them on this issue. Do not assume people are educated on this issue.

Q14. Where can I obtain more information?

A. State Council has a web page about the initiative at <http://seiuca.seiu.org/page/signup/dont-sign>, and you can download a flyer at <http://www.csueu.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=7dDbx65Lz6Q%3d&tabid=53>

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