

A Short Explanation of the California Political Reform Act

[Proposition 9](#), which appeared on the June 1974 ballot, created the California Political Reform Act (PRA) and established California's campaign finance and disclosure laws for state and local campaigns, candidates, officeholders, and ballot measures. Prop 9 created the Fair Political Practices Commission ([FPPC](#)) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA.

Then Secretary of State Edmund G. Brown, Jr., People's Lobby, and Common Cause sponsored Prop 9 and saw support grow for the measure during the campaign season due to the exploding Watergate Scandal. Prior to the passage of Prop 9, state law required disclosure of campaign receipts and expenditures but was largely silent on the PRA's other provisions, as described below.

The PRA, which both legislation and initiatives have amended many times since 1974, does all of the following:

1. Establishes campaign finance limits and disclosure rules. These are currently governed by [Proposition 34](#) (SB 1223 [Burton], Chapter 102) of 2000.
2. Regulates lobbyists, including requiring lobbyists to register with the Secretary of State and file periodic reports disclosing their activities. Prop 9 also set the \$10 limit on gifts that lobbyists may make to public officials.
3. Defines conflicts of interest for public officials, requires public agencies to adopt conflict of interest codes, and requires public officials, including most legislative staff, to disclose their financial interests. Disclosure of financial interests occurs through filing of the Statement of Economic Interests, also known as the [Form 700](#).
4. Requires the Secretary of State to produce a [state ballot pamphlet](#).
5. Prohibits mass mailings by public officials, which resulted from changes to the PRA through [Proposition 73](#) of 1988 and [SB 45 \(Mendoza\) of 2017](#).
6. Establishes rules of ethics for public office, which were added primarily through [Proposition 112](#) (SCA 32 [Roberti]) in 1990.

The FPPC ensures compliance with the PRA and consists of five members appointed to staggered four-year terms. The governor appoints the chair and a member from a different political party. The State Controller, Secretary of State, and Attorney General each appoint a member; only three commissioners may be from the same political party. The chair is the only member of the commission who is considered a full-time member and who receives a salary.

The text of the PRA can be found [here](#).