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February 8, 2000

Hon. Bill Lockyer  
Attorney General  
1300 I Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, California 95814

Attention: Ms. Diane Calkins  
Initiative Coordinator

Dear Attorney General Lockyer:

Pursuant to Elections Code Section 9005, we have reviewed the proposed initiative cited as the "California Internet Petition Act" (File No. SA 2000 RF 0001, Amendment No. 1-NS).

**Proposal**

*Changes in Qualification Process.* A referendum is the power of the electors, as provided in the California Constitution, to approve or reject certain types of statutes enacted by the Legislature. This measure would amend the California Constitution to modify the process for qualifying a referendum measure for the statewide ballot. Specifically, this measure allows a longer period of time for referendum proponents to collect signatures to qualify such measures for the ballot, and reduces the number of signatures that referendum proponents would be required to collect.

*Referendum Petitions.* This initiative specifies the format and content of the forms used to circulate petitions for a referendum, changing current law by providing that the

text of a statute that is the subject of a referendum effort is no longer required to appear on petition forms. The petition forms would have to identify an Internet Web site maintained by the Secretary of State at which the text of the statute and the petition form itself would be available to the public.

*Secretary of State's Role.* This measure provides for the submittal of referendum petition forms directly to the Secretary of State, who is to keep a running count of the number of unverified signatures received and make that information available to the public on the Internet. Current law provides for the petitions to be submitted under a specified process to county registrars of voters.

*Parts of Statutes.* This measure would modify state law so that parts of statutes would no longer be subject to referendum. State law currently provides that statutes or parts of statutes are subject to referendum.

### **Fiscal Effect**

*Administrative Costs.* This initiative would probably result in additional state costs for the Secretary of State to coordinate the collection and verification by counties of referendum petitions and to provide specified information and referendum petition forms on an Internet site maintained by that office. These costs would probably not be significant.

*Election Costs.* To the extent that the provisions of this measure resulted in the circulation and qualification of additional referenda, this measure could result in additional state and county government costs for conducting elections on these statewide ballot measures. Specifically, the state and counties could incur additional costs for the printing and mailing of ballot pamphlets and local voting materials and to adjust their election procedures to accommodate the placement of additional referenda measures on the ballot as late as 31 days before an election.

These additional costs could amount to several million dollars per election. The exact costs cannot be estimated and would depend upon such factors as the length of the text of the statutes that are the subject of any referenda, the number of successful referenda petition efforts, and the timing of qualification of the referenda.

### **Summary of Fiscal Effects**

This measure could result in significant costs for the state and for county governments on a statewide basis, potentially amounting to several million dollars per election.

Sincerely,

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Elizabeth G. Hill  
Legislative Analyst

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B. Timothy Gage  
Director of Finance