

October 30th, 2025

Commission Streamlining Task Force
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
Room 263
San Francisco, CA 94102



Re: **OPPOSE** at-will removal of Ethics Commissioners and repeal of the Ethics Commission's authority to place measures on the ballot

Dear Members of the Commission Streamlining Task Force,

California Common Cause writes in **strong opposition** to the staff's recommendation to grant at-will rather than for-cause removal of ethics commissioners and repeal of the Ethics Commission's authority to place measures pertaining to laws under its purview on the ballot. If enacted, these reforms would diminish the Ethics Commission's independence and invite politics into the essential oversight role the Commission administers.

These provisions are crucial safeguards for the independence of the Ethics Commission (hereinafter, the Commission) and are recognized as best practices by good government organizations. Eliminating them would undermine the Commission's independence and could lead to political interference in its essential oversight and accountability functions.

At-will removal invites appointing authorities to remove Ethics Commissioners for political reasons or because Commissioners do not vote the way their appointing authorities want them to. Conversely, for-cause removal of Commissioners serves as a safeguard against political interference and better ensures that loyalty to those who appointed them does not influence the Commission's oversight and decision-making responsibilities. This principle is acknowledged in other jurisdictions; for example, the state's Fair Political Practices Commission and the ethics commissions in Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Diego all mandate for-cause removal of their ethics commissioners.¹

Allowing the Ethics Commission discretion to place ordinances on the ballot for laws under its purview is one of the most important checks to the Commission's independence, and it should not be repealed. The Commission has not abused this authority, as it has only used it 5 times in its history, and all measures it has placed on the ballot have passed. It is likely that some or all of these measures would not have become law, or would have been significantly weakened, if elected officials had the final say. Ethics oversight and enforcement is perhaps the only area of government where elected officials should not have the final word. We do not elect public officials to police themselves. There must be independent and meaningful oversight of government officials for the public to retain trust in its government. Ethics Commission ballot placement is a check on elected officials who would neglect or diminish the laws that hold them accountable.

¹ See [Cal Gov Code, Sec 83105](#), [Los Angeles City Charter, Sec 700\(e\)](#), [Oakland Charter, Sec 603\(d\)\(6\)](#), [San Diego MC, Sec 26.0408](#).

For these reasons, we **strongly oppose** *at-will rather than for-cause removal of ethics commissioners* and *the repeal of the Ethics Commission's authority to place measures on the ballot*. We urge the Task Force to deny these proposed changes to the Ethics Commission's independence.

Sincerely,

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