

Reform Pensions 2014

For Immediate Release
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Pension Initiative Proponents to File Legal Challenge against the Attorney General's Inaccurate Ballot Summary

San Jose, Calif. – The proponents of a statewide pension reform initiative have announced that they will be filing a legal challenge to correct the inaccurate and misleading ballot summary published by the Office of Attorney General Kamala Harris.

“The ballot summary is just plain wrong,” said San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, the initiative’s chief proponent. “It provides an inaccurate description of our initiative and misleads the voters as to what the measure does. The Attorney General’s Office has failed to meet its legal duty to give voters a ‘true and impartial’ summary of our initiative.”

The lead sentence in the ballot summary incorrectly states that the initiative eliminates constitutional protections for employee pension and retiree healthcare benefits.

“Our initiative simply does not eliminate vested rights for government workers,” continued Mayor Reed. “It protects the benefits that employees accrue as work is performed, while giving government leaders the tools they need to negotiate changes to employees’ future unearned benefits once labor contracts expire.”

View Sections 12(a) and 12(b) of the initiative language:

http://reformpensions2014.com/wp-content/themes/Pension_Reform/AmendedInitiativeLanguage.pdf

While the Attorney General’s Office has a duty to provide a “true and impartial” summary of the initiative, the summary is neither true, nor impartial. In fact, some of the language appears to have been lifted from a memo that a Washington-based polling firm, Garin-Hart-Young Research Group, wrote to its public employee union clients opposing the measure. This memo urged use of the word “eliminate” because it creates a negative impression of the initiative in the minds of the voters. Furthermore, the ballot summary singles out a few specific public occupations that are held in high regard by voters, and which editorial boards across the state felt would unduly prejudice the voters.

Read the following Sacramento Bee column, which includes a link to the memo cited above:

<http://www.sacbee.com/2013/12/19/6014489/pollster-gives-unions-roadmap.html>

“The people of California deserve better, and consequently, we have no choice but to file suit,” said Mayor Reed.

In California, the only recourse for correcting an inaccurate ballot summary is through the courts.

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Press Release: Pension Initiative Proponents to File Legal Challenge against the Attorney General's Inaccurate Ballot Summary

January 30, 2014

Page 2

The proponents will not begin collecting signatures until the legal challenge is resolved. Given the amount of time it will likely take for the courts to resolve the issue, it will be extremely difficult to gather the required number of signatures in time for the November election.

“While it is unlikely that we will be able to meet the deadline for the November 2014 ballot, we are committed to bringing this initiative before the voters as soon as possible and ensuring that cities, counties and other government agencies have the tools they need to control their skyrocketing retirement costs and protect essential public services,” concluded Mayor Reed.

For more information, please email: media@reformpensions2014.com

To schedule an interview with Mayor Reed, please contact one of his Public Information Officers at (408) 535-4800.

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