



August 11, 2025

## VIA PORTAL

Assemblymember LaShae Sharp-Collins  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 4130  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
State Capitol, Room 412  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## OPPOSE — AB 1392

Dear Assemblymember Sharp-Collins and Chair Caballero:

The First Amendment Coalition and Freedom of the Press Foundation write in respectful opposition to AB 1392, which eliminates critical transparency protections that have long allowed journalists to do the important work of keeping communities informed about elected officials and candidates for office.

In addition to undermining public oversight of public officials, AB 1392 would create significant cost burdens on the state, given the requirement that the Secretary of State or applicable local elections official provide each county elections office with a list identifying each elected official or candidate residing in the county. It also would require the county elections official to make the office holder or candidate's information confidential within five business days. Given the high costs to state and local governments and questions about implementation, as well as the immeasurable cost to the democratic principles of public oversight of our public officials, we ask you to pursue alternative proposals to address concerns about security.

Existing law generally makes voter registration records confidential. See [Gov. Code § 7924.000](#). However, journalists are among a select few with a right of access to select pieces of information contained in voter registration affidavits. Specifically, agencies must disclose the home address, telephone number, email address, precinct number and prior registration information to "any candidate for federal, state, or local office, to any committee for or against any initiative or referendum measure for which legal publication is made, and to any person for election, scholarly, journalistic, or political purposes, or for governmental purposes, as determined by the Secretary of State." See [Elec. Code § 2194\(a\)\(3\)](#). (Other personal data, such as social security number and signature of the voter, is confidential in all circumstances, per Elec. Code § 2194(b).)

The narrow transparency protection is essential for a wide range of important public service journalism, including public corruption reporting.<sup>1</sup> Access to politicians' voter registration affidavits, including their full residential addresses, enables journalists to probe their fitness and eligibility for office, in addition to general truthfulness.<sup>2</sup> It also allows journalists to inform readers

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<sup>1</sup> See Jodie Gil, *Journalists' Reflections on Using Home Addresses in Reporting*, 6 J. Civic Info. 1 (2024) (available at <https://journals.flvc.org/civic/article/view/137910/143011>).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Brandon Pho, Silicon Valley lawmaker running for Congress doesn't live in his district, San José Spotlight (July 24, 2024), <https://sanjosespotlight.com/silicon-valley-lawmaker-california-assemblymember-evan-low-running-for-co>

about newsworthy activities at public officials' residences, such as calls for police service<sup>3</sup>; investigate matters of public importance, such as acceptance of controversial public benefits<sup>4</sup>; and perform watchdog functions on a range of important topics, from bribery scandals to other breaches of public trust:

**SAN DIEGO** — Home deal netted hundreds of thousands for Cunningham

San Diego Union-Tribune, Aug. 28, 2016  
<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2005/06/26/home-deal-netted-hundreds-of-thousands-for-cunningham/>

**BAKERSFIELD** — Former school district board president sentenced following voter fraud conviction

KGET, July 9, 2025  
<https://www.kget.com/news/crime-watch/palmer-moland-sentenced-following-voter-fraud-conviction/>

**CRESCENT CITY** — Del Norte County sheriff resigns after being charged with voter fraud

Los Angeles Times, March 14, 2022  
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-03-14/del-norte-county-sheriff-charged-with-voter-fraud>

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[ngress-doesnt-live-in-his-state-district-election-2024/](#) ("Campaign finance and voter registration records reviewed by San José Spotlight link Low to a condo on Campisi Way in Campbell — which falls outside his current Assembly District 26."); Andrew Kaczynski & Em Steck, *California Senate hopeful Rep. Adam Schiff claimed primary residences in Maryland and California*, CNN (Nov. 3, 2023, at 3:58 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/02/politics/adam-schiff-primary-residence-maryland-california>.

<sup>3</sup> See Amy Taxin, *A Southern California judge has been arrested on suspicion of killing his wife in the couple's home*, AP (Aug. 4, 2023, at 2:37 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/california-judge-arrested-wife-homicide-83257911dc9b2e00dc8e9bfd2d0a35b2>

<sup>4</sup> See David Zahniser & Taylor Goldenstein, *City Atty. Mike Feuer, turf rebate recipient, steers clear of DWP records lawsuit*, L.A. Times (Feb. 8, 2016, at 3:00 AM), <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-feuer-turf-rebate-20160208-story.html>; Taylor Goldenstein, *Names, addresses of DWP customers who received turf rebates are released*, L.A. Times (Feb. 26, 2016, at 7:59 PM), <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-turf-rebate-data-release-with-exceptions-20160225-story.html>; Matt Stevens, *Massive \$340-million turf rebate program plagued by poor planning and oversight, audit finds*, L.A. Times (Dec. 10, 2016, at 10:05 AM), <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-water-turf-rebate-program-audit-20161209-story.html> ;

As the Mercury News and the East Bay Times said in a recent editorial opposing AB 1392, this **“bill robs voters of timely information about candidates.”**<sup>5</sup> Eliminating the ability of the press to perform its watchdog function will hurt all Californians and will not be effective in preventing the acts of political violence cited as the reason for this legislation.

To explain the circumstances under which the home address, telephone number and email address can be obtained by journalists in the limited circumstances described in section 2194(a)(3), see [Elec. Code § 2188](#). It sets forth the requirements for a requester to seek this restricted information. Requesters must fill out an application providing their name, address, phone number, drivers license or other identification number, the specific information requested, and a statement of the intended use of the information. The requester must swear under penalty of perjury the accuracy of the information being submitted. This carefully considered approach the Legislature developed to provide access to these records properly balances privacy interests with public access to this information.

Existing law contains additional privacy protections for voters (including candidates and elected officials) with specific safety concerns. Elections Code sections 2166 and 2166.5 allow a voter to keep their residence information confidential for “good cause that a life-threatening circumstance exists to the voter or a member of the voter’s household” or if the person participates in a program granting address confidentiality to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Section 2166.7, meanwhile, it allows a peace officer with life-threatening circumstances to make their address confidential, while Section 2166.8 expands confidentiality provisions to election workers. AB 1392, by contrast, offers blanket secrecy to all politicians, as defined, without any showing of specific risk. This is extraordinary secrecy that no other Californian enjoys.

Additionally, AB 1392 amends Elections Code § 8040(b) to allow “[a]t the discretion of the elections official, a candidate for a judicial office, or a candidate for any office” to “withhold the candidate’s residence address from the declaration of candidacy. If a candidate does not state the candidate’s residence address on the declaration of candidacy, the elections official shall verify whether the candidate’s address is within the appropriate political subdivision and add the notation ‘verified’ where appropriate on the declaration.”

This extraordinary secrecy would make it harder for journalists to fairly report on political campaigns in the manner necessary to foster robust political debate and maintain an informed electorate. Depriving journalists of primary tools needed to proactively contact candidates would significantly advantage better financed campaigns that have the resources to initiate contact or can leverage existing media relationships. Less established candidates, meanwhile, would be burdened with the task of reaching out to media outlets effectively shielded from contacting them.

These aren’t trivial concerns about hardships on newsgathering. We regard these concerns as foundational to a representative democracy — a public check on a candidate’s sworn statement

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<sup>5</sup> See Editorial Board, California bill will shield candidates from press scrutiny, Mercury News and East Bay Times (Aug. 6, 2025, at 3:45 a.m.), <https://www.mercurynews.com/2025/08/06/editorial-california-bill-would-shield-candidates-from-press-scrutiny/>

that they reside in a place that makes them legally eligible to hold the office they are seeking. Depriving voters of the ability to independently verify this basic information absent evidence of a danger risks undermining core democratic principles.

We appreciate the stated intent to address safety concerns following acts of political violence around the country, but we must oppose AB 1392 because it will not contribute to greater security for those choosing to perform public service. Instead, if enacted, this law would reduce checks on politicians and have a number of unintended consequences that hurt trust in government and elections. And with the potentially significant appropriation attached to the bill, we believe AB 1392 should not advance.

We look forward to continuing this conversation with the author's office and sponsor, and appreciate the appropriations committee considering these concerns.

FIRST AMENDMENT COALITION

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS FOUNDATION

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cc: Honorable Members and Staff of Senate Appropriations  
Michael Lucien, Chief of Staff, Office of Assemblymember Sharp-Collins