

3/23/2016

The Honorable Ben Allen  
Senate Standing Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments  
State Capitol, Room 3191  
Sacramento, California 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 816 (Hill) – State Board of Equalization: members: contributions – SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Allen,

CALPIRG supports Senate Bill 816, a measure to close a loophole in the Kopp Conflict of Interest Act of 1990 that allows members of the Board of Equalization to accept contributions that may create conflicts of interest in their hearings.

The Kopp Conflict of Interest Act of 1990 currently requires members of the BOE who have accepted individual contributions totaling \$250 or more in a 12-month span to disclose these contributions and refrain from influencing any case currently before the Board. Its intent is to ensure that Californians' tax disputes are given fair hearing and adjudication.

However, the Kopp Act leaves open a loophole which allows members to receive contributions from the same party which are individually smaller than \$250 but altogether can far exceed that number. These contributions do not need to be disclosed, and members of the Board who receive them may still adjudicate even cases related to the giver. This allows for potentially serious conflicts of interest and the possibility of corruption.

SB 816 will prevent Board members from adjudicating cases if they have received a contribution of *any* size from a party involved in a case before the Board within the last 12 months, and require them to disclose these gifts. By doing so, transparency and accountability will increase, ensuring that Californians' tax disputes are decided fairly and impartially.

Respectfully, we ask for your support for SB 816.

Sincerely,



Emily Rusch  
Executive Director  
CALPIRG  
510-844-6803  
[erusch@calpirg.org](mailto:erusch@calpirg.org)