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Rich Mischief

The SFGate.com headline was clear: “State ballot initiative fee raised to \$2,000 to prevent mischief.”

It just wasn’t accurate.

Assembly Bill 1100, introduced by Assemblyman Evan Low (D-Campbell), passed by Democrats in the legislature and signed by Gov. Jerry Brown, doesn’t do anything to address “mischief.” Which, incidentally, abounds in California government — especially in the legislature.

The new law raises the cost for citizens to file a ballot initiative from \$200 to \$2,000. Now, if the mischief-maker has \$2,000 to spend, this new law accomplishes . . . nothing.

Only five of the 26 states with initiative and/or referendum charge citizens any filing fee. California’s is now the highest by far.

“There are some lunatics out there and for \$200 we encourage them to put measures on the ballot that say we should put a gun to the head of someone who is gay or lesbian, bisexual or transgender,” argued Sen. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco). AB1100 was about “clearing out what’s nonsense.”

The senator was referring to an initiative filed by an Orange County attorney, called the “Sodomite Suppression Act,” which, if passed, would establish the death penalty for homosexual conduct.

“This reform is overdue,” argued Assemblyman Low, calling it “a threshold for reasonableness.”

Reasonableness? Those with \$2,000 are more reasonable than those with just \$200?

The anti-gay measure was a stunt. No signatures were collected. It wasn’t going to be on any ballot. Still, the Attorney General went to court to have it declared unconstitutional. Case closed.

So, why pass AB1100?

To make it harder for voters to go around legislators via the ballot initiative. Just more mischief.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

