

AP California News

Apr 10, 7:51 PM EDT

Assembly passes change to campaign disclosure bill

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Associated Press

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) -- A bill that would force political nonprofits to reveal the names of campaign donors no longer applies retroactively under an amendment pushed by Republican lawmakers and approved Thursday by the Assembly.

The Assembly agreed to the amendment by unanimous voice vote after SB27 fell one vote short of passing the Senate last month.

Sen. Lou Correa, D-Anaheim, introduced the bill in response to \$15 million of anonymous contributions funneled through conservative nonprofits ahead of the 2012 general election. The money went to groups fighting against Gov. Jerry Brown's tax-hike initiative, which passed, and pushing for a failed initiative that would have restricted the use of union dues for political purposes.

The subsequent investigation into the origin of the money led to the largest campaign reporting fine in California history.

SB27 would require nonprofits to disclose the sources of donations that are intended for political campaigns. The bill also would require campaign committees that raise more than \$1 million to keep a list of their top 10 contributors of \$10,000 or more and make that available online.

Senate Minority Leader Bob Huff said he supported increased disclosure but objected to SB27 because it would have unfairly applied to donations made before the law took effect.

"Thousands of unsuspecting people who have already made a contribution to a nonprofit this year will unknowingly be exposed," Huff said in a statement after last month's failed vote in the Senate.

The amendment that passed the Assembly on Thursday is designed to answer Republican concerns.

Political nonprofits would not have to reveal the source of donations made before July 1, the date the amended bill would become law if signed by Gov. Jerry Brown. Disclosure would be required for the November general election but not for the June primary.

Because SB27 would take effect this year, it is considered an urgency bill that requires a two-thirds vote in both houses. Senate Democrats lost their two-thirds supermajority after suspending three of their members who are involved in legal cases.

Senate GOP spokesman Peter DeMarco said the caucus is reviewing the amendment language before taking a position.

Republicans have criticized Democrats for slow action on the bill. It was introduced in December 2012 and approved by a Democratic supermajority in the Senate in May 2013. However, the Assembly did not approve an amended version of the bill until this February. When that version was sent back to the Senate, it failed to receive the two-thirds vote needed with two Democratic senators with legal cases on leave and no Republican support.

DeMarco said the bill could have been in effect for the entire 2014 election season without forcing political nonprofits to scramble to comply with new rules.

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