

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 970

Introduced by Assembly Member Levine

February 22, 2007

An act to add Chapter 6.5 (commencing with Section 20505) to Division 20 of the Elections Code, relating to elections.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 970, as introduced, Levine. Election campaigns: candidates' debates.

Existing law encourages every candidate for public office in this state to subscribe to the Code of Fair Campaign Practices, which generally provides that a candidate will pledge to conduct his or her campaign in accordance with the basic principles of decency, honesty, and fair play in order that, after vigorously contested, but fairly conducted campaigns, the citizens of this state may exercise their constitutional right to vote, free from dishonest and unethical practices which tend to prevent the full and free expression of the will of the voters. The purpose of the Code of Fair Campaign Practices is to give voters guidelines in determining fair play and to encourage candidates to discuss issues instead of untruths or distortions.

This bill would require the Secretary of State to create the California Gubernatorial Debate Commission for the purpose of inviting candidates for Governor to a series of 3 debates in specified locations and of establishing the rules and formats of each debate, as specified.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 6.5 (commencing with Section 20505)
2 is added to Division 20 of the Elections Code, to read:

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CHAPTER 6.5. CALIFORNIA GUBERNATORIAL DEBATE
COMMISSION

7 20505. (a) The Secretary of State shall establish the California
8 Gubernatorial Debate Commission. The commission shall be
9 responsible for inviting candidates for Governor to a series of three
10 debates and for establishing the rules and formats of each debate.
11 Each candidate shall be notified of the rules and format at least 10
12 calendar days prior to each debate.

13 (b) The commission shall hold a total of three debates prior to
14 each general election for the office of Governor as follows:

15 (1) The first debate shall be held not less than 40 days nor more
16 than 55 days prior to the election.

17 (2) The second debate shall be held not less than 21 days nor
18 more than 27 days prior to the election.

19 (3) The third debate shall be held not less than four days nor
20 more than 10 days prior to the election.

21 (c) The rules for each debate may vary, except that all debates
22 shall comply with all of the following conditions:

23 (1) Each debate shall be held on a weekday between 6 p.m. and
24 8 p.m..

25 (2) Each debate shall be at least 60 minutes long.

26 (3) Each debate shall be in a location with enough space to seat
27 an audience of at least 100 members of the general public in
28 addition to credentialed media, campaign staff, and other invited
29 guests.

30 (d) One debate shall be held in Southern California, one in the
31 Central San Joaquin Valley of California, and one in Northern
32 California. The locations for the first, second, and third debate
33 shall rotate with each gubernatorial election.

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