



March 12, 2019

The Honorable Senator Thomas J. Umberg
Chair, Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee
State Capitol, Room 2203
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 27 (McGuire, Weiner) – SUPPORT

Dear Chairperson Umberg:

With more than 32,000 members and online supporters in California, Americans for Tax Fairness is a coalition representing [425 national, state and local endorsing organizations](#) united in support of a tax system that works for all Americans, not just the wealthy. We are writing in support of Senate Bill 27, the Presidential Transparency and Accountability Act, introduced by Senators McGuire and Wiener, which would require all presidential candidates to publicly release their tax returns for the five most recent years in order to appear on the California primary ballot.

We offered testimony in support of a nearly identical bill two years ago, and since that time the justification and urgency for this legislation has only increased. President Donald Trump's refusal to release his income tax returns departs from over four decades of established political tradition, respected by both Republicans and Democrats alike, denying voters the opportunity to fully evaluate his fitness for the office of President of the United States.

Transparency is – or should be – a nonpartisan issue. As we explain in our report, [The Case for Congress Obtaining Trump's Tax Returns](#), a presidential candidate's income tax returns provide voters with essential information regarding potential conflicts of interest, sources of income, domestic and international business dealings, financial status, and charitable donations. These are critical questions that voters deserve to have answered before an election, because unlike members of Congress and federal appointees, presidents are largely exempt from conflict-of-interest laws.

This legislation is not just about President Trump. It is about providing essential information to voters and restoring transparency to our presidential election system. It does not exclude or constrain candidate participation; rather it is a procedural ballot access requirement – similar to determining filing fees and the number of signatures required – in which states exercise their broad powers to make ballots for any office, including a federal office, comprehensive and informative to voters.

Contrary to President Trump's assertion that the [American people don't care](#) about his tax returns, [a Quinnipiac poll](#) found that two-thirds of voters – 67% – said they believe Trump should make his tax returns public, with just 24% saying he shouldn't. This is consistent with other [polls as recently as January](#) that found six in 10 Americans favor the release of the president's tax returns. In addition, ATF and affiliated groups have collected more than 350,000 petition signatures urging Congress to obtain and release the president's returns. Clearly, Americans want this kind of financial transparency.

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed H.R. 1, legislation that would among other things require candidates for president and vice president, and sitting presidents and vice presidents, to release the last 10 years of their personal tax returns—both personal and business tax returns. However, this legislation is unlikely to become law before the 2020 election.

Therefore, it is critical that states step in now to ensure that future presidential and vice-presidential candidates remain accountable to the public. By passing SB 27, California would give voters more complete information about candidates for the nation's highest offices and their potential conflicts of interest and set an example for other states considering similar legislation.

We respectfully request your support of this important legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Clemente", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Frank Clemente
Executive Director