



(Approved May X, 2025)
CALIFORNIA FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION
MINUTES OF HEARING, Public Session
Thursday, April 10, 2025
10:00 a.m.

Present: Chair Silver, Commissioner Ortiz, Commissioner Wilson, and Commissioner Brandt

Executive Staff Present:

Galena West, Executive Director
Dave Bainbridge, General Counsel
Shrdha Shah, Chief of Audits and Assistance
Jue Wang, PhD, Chief of Administration
Lindsey Nakano, Senior FPPC Legislative Counsel
Shery Yang, Communications Director

Call to Order.

Chair Silver called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

1. Public Comments for items not on the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Former City of Cotati Councilmember George Barich expressed concern about the political process in his jurisdiction. Laurie Alderman, a neighbor of Mr. Barich, expressed concern over the fairness of elections in the City of Cotati and stated that accessing Form 700s had been difficult. Commissioner Wilson stated the value of publicly accessible Form 700s.

2. Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: To approve the March 2024 meeting minutes. Moved by Chair Silver, seconded by Commissioner Ortiz. The motion passed 4-0.

3-4. Consent Calendar

Chair Silver pulled item four.

3. In the Matter of Vicky Santana, Santana for Senate 2018, and David Gould; FPPC No. 20/614.

Commissioner Wilson noted that while this was a 2018 case, the large number of staff working on the case displays how difficult it was to resolve, even with an extended timeframe.

MOTION: To approve the consent calendar. Moved by Chair Silver; seconded by Commissioner Ortiz. The motion passed 4-0.

4. In the Matter of Evan Low and Evan Low for Assembly 2020; FPPC Nos. 20/231 & 23/443.

Chair Silver recused himself from Item 4 pursuant to the recusal standards he set forth at the beginning of his term at the May 2024 Commission meeting and left the room.

Ms. Brereton presented the item. Commissioner Wilson presided.

Commissioner Brandt asked if this number of violations was typical for a stipulation. Ms. Brereton stated that it was uncommon and represented the egregious nature of the violations. All possible violations are being brought to the attention of the Commission, which is not usual. Typically, counts are combined, or streamline-eligible counts are used as aggravation.

Commissioner Brandt asked whether the investigation revealed any requests for advice from the Respondent about whether this information needed to be reported to the FPPC at the time violations were being committed.

Ms. Brereton responded that there was no evidence of that in the stipulation. However, Respondent's attorneys were involved and giving guidance to the Respondent.

MOTION: To approve the item. Moved by Commissioner Ortiz, seconded by Commissioner Brandt. The motion passed 3-0.

Chair Silver returned and Commissioner Brandt exited the meeting at 10:19am.

5. Cal-Access Replacement System (CARS).

CGI Project Manager Denise Tower, Assistant CARS Project Director John Heinlein, and Political Reform Division Assistant Chief Kira Rasmussen of the California Secretary of State's office presented the item.

Chair Silver asked the presenters to elaborate on which stakeholders the Secretary of State's office is engaging with. Commissioner Wilson asked how many stakeholders were involved.

Mr. Heinlein responded that they were focused on four primary external user groups. Ms. Rasmussen added that they were also involved with California Professional Treasurer's Association and California Political Attorney's Association. Ms. Tower stated that external stakeholder meetings typically draw 60 people, and vendor meetings typically draw 30 to 40 people.

Chair Silver asked whether the launch date of November 2026 was internal or for the public. Ms. Tower confirmed that it was the public launch date, following the 2026 General Election.

Chair Silver stated that the wireframe looks excellent and easily navigable.

Commissioner Wilson asked when the former system was developed. Mr. Heinlein responded that it was developed in the 1990s.

Commissioner Ortiz commended the Secretary of State's Office for taking on this challenge.

Chair Silver asked if there were any plans to include artificial intelligence in the new system. Ms. Tower responded that there was nothing official planned, but conversations were being held behind the scenes.

Chair Silver stated that the FPPC was happy to help in any way, and thanked Executive Director West, General Counsel Bainbridge, Education and External Affairs Unit Manager Chloe Hackert and Senior FPPC Legislative Counsel Lindsey Nakano for their work.

Commissioner Wilson asked if there were other states implementing similar technology. Mr. Heinlein responded that there were, New York City recently requested similar proposals, but California's system was the most advanced. Ms. Rasmusen added that the State of Washington provided valuable advice before California began creating our new system. She noted that California's system would be unique in that it combined campaign and lobbying information.

Education and External Affairs Unit Manager Chloe Hackert presented a sample of a report that would be generated after data input into the new CARS system.

Chair Silver stated that he thought this was an efficient, data-driven approach.

Commissioner Ortiz asked if this sample was representative of what a public official might be filing. Ms. Hackert responded that Form 460s were still in use and officials would file online, this was an example of an output of combined data compiled within the new CARS system. She compared the sample report to a bank statement of all of the individual or campaign's activities.

Commissioner Wilson asked how cities and counties have responded to this upcoming change. Ms. Hackert responded that many were excited about increased transparency that will be provided by CARS.

Chair Silver compared the previous Cal-Access system to the new sample presented by Ms. Hackert and compared the new system to signing up for an email or product instead of completing a form.

6. Adoption of Proposed Amendments to Regulations Concerning Electronic Filing of SEIs with the FPPC.

Assistant General Counsel Brian Lau presented the amendments to regulations.

Regulation 18730

Commissioner Ortiz asked whether filers had discretion over where to file. Mr. Lau stated that where an individual files is determined by agencies and code reviewing bodies.

Chair Silver noted how productive AB 1170 has been because it requires forms to be sent directly to the FPPC.

Commissioner Wilson asked whether there was any exception for those in need of accommodations that allowed them to not file online.

Mr. Lau responded that this had been a question in the past in relation to language barriers, and in that case, the FPPC has referred them back to their agency for individual assistance.

Chair Silver called for a five-minute break to allow public commentators to prepare. The meeting resumed at 11:20 am.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Sunnyvale City Clerk David Carnihan thanked the Commission for their implementation of the amendment to Regulation 18313.5 and expressed support for all Section 87200 filers to be posted on-line.

MOTION: To approve the amendments to Regulations 18115.2, 18313.5, 18313.6, 18724, 18730, 18754, and 18756 as well as the repeal of Regulation 18753. Moved by Commissioner Ortiz, seconded by Commissioner Wilson. The motion passed 3-0.

Chair Silver clarified that the Commission was following the Legal Division's recommendation that all Section 87200 filers have their Statements of Economic Interests posted online.

7. Legislative Update.

Senior FPPC Legislative Counsel Lindsey Nakano presented the item.

SB 280 (Cervantes) Prohibition on Contributions in State or Local Office Buildings

Commissioner Ortiz asked whether this bill would apply to a district office in a privately owned building. Ms. Nakano confirmed.

AB 775 (Fong) Behested Payment Reporting

Commissioner Wilson noted that it seems to have bipartisan support but asked for Ms. Nakano's opinion. She responded that it was her impression that the bill was widely well-received.

SB 42 (Umberg, Allen, and Cervantes) Public Campaign Financing

Chair Silver asked what Senator Choi's concerns were about the bill in response to hearing that Senator Choi was the lone no vote. Ms. Nakano did not recall if he had specific concerns.

SB 300 (Padilla) Exception to Conflict of Interest Prohibition

Chair Silver stated that any exception to conflict of interest rules merited scrutiny, and asked to hear from the author's office about their goals, especially about how this would further the purposes of the Political Reform Act.

8. Executive Staff Reports.

Ms. Brereton and Mr. Burton presented the Enforcement Division report and highlighted progress in decreasing the number of cases.

Chief of Audits and Assistance Shrdha Shah presented the Audits and Assistance Division report.

Commissioner Wilson asked how many individuals are included in auditing draws. Ms. Shah responded that it varies between different types of draws. The next draw will be in August or September and will be posted on the website.

General Counsel Dave Bainbridge presented the Legal Division report and noted that the laws and regulations factsheet had been updated online and highlighted the Division's progress in reviewing conflict of interest codes.

Chief of Administration and Technology Dr. Jue Wang presented the Administration and Technology Division report, and highlighted that 100% of the March 3rd Form 700 filing group and 92% of the April 1st group had filed. At the same time last year, only 84% of required individuals had filed. Chair Silver congratulated Dr. Wang and her team on the improvement.

Chair Silver asked how many inquiries the Statement of Economic Interest unit had received in the past month. Dr. Wang responded that it was over 5,000.

Commissioner Wilson asked for examples of what questions were received. Dr. Wang responded that because this was the first year of mandatory e-filing, many inquiries were related to passwords and technology, in addition to those who left filing to the last minute.

She highlighted that the SEI unit was also available to meet with filers in person or via phone or video. They can be contacted at form700@fppc.ca.gov or online.

9. Commissioner Comments and Proposed Future Agenda Items.

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting. Moved by Commissioner Ortiz, seconded by Chair Silver. The motion passed 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eva Hartman
Executive Fellow
Approved May X, 2025

Adam E. Silver, Chair
Fair Political Practices Commission