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Senator Mendoza Introduces Bill to Combat Government Corruption
SB 1011 Will Help Prevent Unethical Personal Enrichment in Government Contracting

Sacramento – A bill that strengthens California’s conflict of interest laws and restores public trust and accountability was introduced today by Senator Tony Mendoza (D-Artesia).

SB 1011 will strengthen the conflict of interest law by expanding the definition of family and what constitutes a financial conflict of interest for public officials when voting on government contracts before any governmental body, board or commission of which that public officer is a member.

“Elected and government officials should abstain from voting when a family member has a financial interest or may benefit from the outcome of a public contract decision under the jurisdiction of that official,” said Senator Tony Mendoza.

SB 1011 will increase governmental accountability by expanding the definition of “remote interest” in government contract decisions to include participation in the making of a contract deemed to be of financial interest to the public officer’s adult child, parent, sibling, or the spouse of the child, parent, or sibling. The public official must have actual knowledge of the financial interest and is only in violation if he or she knowingly withholds information regarding their financial interest from the board or body of which they are a voting member.

“Government officials should be barred from using their positions to enrich themselves financially, directly or indirectly,” said Senator Mendoza. “As public officials, we should be held to the highest ethical standards in order to avoid any conflicts of interest or perception of impropriety when conducting business on the public’s behalf.”

A violation of this new law will result in disqualification from ever holding any office in California in addition to prison time and/or a fine of not more than $1000. A local district attorney or the California Attorney General would have the authority to investigate alleged violations of the law and the discretion to pursue criminal prosecution. If no criminal prosecution is pursued, the Fair Political Practices Commission can proceed with administrative or civil action, which is set forth in current law.

“In the aftermath of scandals during the past several years, it is time for California to strengthen its conflict of interest laws. We need to restore accountability and the public’s trust in government,” added Senator Mendoza.

In other states, conflict of interest laws are broader and provide stronger protections to prevent public officials from using their governmental positions to enrich themselves or their families financially. For more information on what other states conflict of interest laws cover, please visit the National Conference of State Legislatures’ website: http://www.ncsl.org/research/ethics/conflict-of-interest-overview.aspx

Senator Tony Mendoza, a Los Angeles native and former elementary school teacher in East Los Angeles, represents the 32nd Senate District encompassing portions of Los Angeles and Orange Counties. For more information about Senator Mendoza visit his website or follow him on Facebook and Twitter.

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