

## ETHICS IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Adopted by Convention Delegates April 30, 1987

*Reviewed by Board of Managers March 2013*

- WHEREAS,** The third Object of PTA is “To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth;” and
- WHEREAS,** The California State PTA believes that securing such laws depends upon an open and honest political process including the dissemination of factual and accurate information; and
- WHEREAS,** PTA members have encountered unethical campaign practices such as “last-minute” mailers containing quotations taken out of context, false and misleading statements and distortions of statistical information; and
- WHEREAS,** The California State PTA believes these unethical practices have contaminated the political process and deprived the citizenry of its right to make informed choices; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA seek and support legislation which would require candidates for office, elected and/or appointed officials, proponents/opponents of initiatives and/or ballot measures to publish and disseminate only factual and accurate information; and which would make failure to comply with such laws a felony; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts cooperate with allied groups to effect the necessary changes in law; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to closely monitor the campaign practices in their communities and demand that only factual and accurate information be used in all political campaigns.

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### BACKGROUND SUMMARY

PTA members throughout the state have communicated their concerns about the misleading kinds of campaign literature received in recent years. They have sent the Board of Managers examples of these materials which have been forwarded to the Secretary of State with State PTA expressions of concern.

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Among the materials giving rise to these concerns have been facsimiles of voter registration cards, unauthorized uses of official stationery, literature with facsimiles of the Seal of the State of California, envelopes imprinted “property tax information” or “federal income tax information,” certified letters of endorsement “from the president,” etc. “Last-minute” mailers have been received containing statements designed to confuse and mislead voters. Some mailers have implied ballot measures and/or candidates for nonpartisan office (e.g., school board, city council) had been endorsed by leading public figures when, in fact, this was not the case.

The California State PTA Board of Managers believes a well-informed citizenry is a cornerstone of our system of government. The laws enacted by legislatures and ballot measures approved by voters directly affect the lives and well-being of children, youth and families. If dishonest, unethical campaign practices become the rule rather than the exception, the Board of Managers fears that decisions having far-reaching consequences may be based on deliberately flawed information.

This resolution directs the California State PTA to pursue a legitimate remedy to counteract unethical campaign practices.