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Sept. 22, 2017

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown Jr.
State Capitol, Office of the Governor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly Bill 1455 (Bocanegra)

Dear Governor Brown

The R Street Institute must regretfully oppose A.B. 1455 (Bocanegra) **and requests your immediate veto of the measure.** R Street is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank with offices in Sacramento and is focused on many areas of public policy, including the promotion of government transparency. California taxpayers have a right to know what contracts are being pursued by government and be able to engage on those deals well before they are enacted.

A.B. 1455 exempts from required disclosure under the California Public Records Act the records of local agencies related to collective bargaining, as long as those records detail such items as recommendations, work products, theories or strategies. Collective bargaining negotiations between labor unions and public agencies must be made available to the public before decisions are made that could be fiscally detrimental to taxpayers. If A.B. 1455 were to become law, the only time the public would see negotiations is when the contract is in its final form. By then, it often is too late to make changes and inform taxpayers. Votes on final contracts frequently occur within 72 hours of their being made public, which provides too little time for the public to have meaningful input.

Taxpayers need to have full access to non-confidential information that can be obtained through Public Records Act requests. So too, municipalities should continue to have the ability to release these documents whenever they wish. A statewide exclusion inhibits local control and prevents them from being transparent with the public. This is especially true in the case of collective bargaining negotiations because of the inherent conflict of interest that exists between public sector union campaign contributions and elected officials.

Sincerely,

Steven Greenhut
Western Regional Director