



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**OCT 15 2017**

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 149 without my signature.

This bill requires any candidate for president to disclose five years of his or her income tax returns before their name can be placed on California's primary election ballot.

Although tax returns are by law confidential, many presidential candidates have voluntarily released them. This bill is a response to President Trump's refusal to release his returns during the last election.

While I recognize the political attractiveness—even the merits—of getting President Trump's tax returns, I worry about the political perils of individual states seeking to regulate presidential elections in this manner. First, it may not be constitutional. Second, it sets a "slippery slope" precedent. Today we require tax returns, but what would be next? Five years of health records? A certified birth certificate? High school report cards? And will these requirements vary depending on which political party is in power?

A qualified candidate's ability to appear on the ballot is fundamental to our democratic system. For that reason, I hesitate to start down a road that well might lead to an ever escalating set of differing state requirements for presidential candidates.

Sincerely,

  
Edmund G. Brown Jr.