



## Atty. General calls for transparency on political giving Harris criticizes Arizona PAC's masked donation against Prop. 30

SAN FRANCISCO (Nov. 9, 2012) – Attorney General Kamala Harris criticized the political shell game that allowed an Arizona political group to pour money against a California tax measure and said the state needs to more forcefully protect the independence and funding of its court system.

Speaking at a noon lunch during the CAOC 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention in San Francisco, Harris said it is unfair to typify her efforts to protect California homeowners against mortgage fraud as a partisan issue and condemned voter suppression efforts that occurred prior to this week's presidential contest.

In a wide-ranging keynote address, Harris also said last year's U.S. Supreme Court decision favoring forced arbitration – a favorite tactic of businesses that gives them the upper hand in disputes with consumers – presents serious challenges to basic legal rights. She also noted the unfriendly reception a CAOC legislative fix received in the statehouse this year. "We have some challenges there," Harris said.

Harris, a former San Francisco District Attorney elected as the state's top cop in 2010, is now considered among the fastest rising stars among Democrats in the U.S. and was a big supporter of President Obama during this year's presidential campaign. In California, she won plaudits this past year for helping negotiate a massive mortgage bailout that returned \$18 billion from the nation's five largest banks to help state homeowners with loans fiscally underwater. She also spearheaded a mortgage reform package that made its way through the Legislature in 2012.

She said her mortgage package was met by initial cynicism from doubters who thought it was "dead on arrival," but it overcame criticisms that the legislative push was driven by partisan politics and proved "it's about doing what's fair. Right is right."

On voter-suppression efforts that hit several states during the presidential election, Harris said "we just need to head this thing off at the pass because it's just getting worse and worse and worse."

She also indicated that the California courts and its top steward, state Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, deserve more budgetary independence given the court's constitutional place as a separate and independent third branch of government. "The Chief Justice should be given an ability to maintain her courts," Harris said.

Harris saved her biggest criticism for the \$11 million, last-minute PAC contribution that helped fund a last-ditch bid to defeat Prop. 30. The ballot measure sponsored by Gov. Jerry Brown ultimately proved victorious in Tuesday's election, but Harris said the voters of California deserved to know the source of that money.

"The gall – the absolute gall," Harris said about the mysterious PAC contribution, which has yet to be traced to its original source, though many pundits speculate that it originated with the billionaire Koch brothers and Karl Rove. She noted that the First Amendment rightfully protects political speech, but that even U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Kennedy noted in the 2010 *Citizens United* decision that full disclosure of the source of campaign donations is the cure for the avalanche of giving that has impacted the political process.

"The citizens of California have the right to critically evaluate the [political] message – and the only way they can do that is if the messenger is known," Harris said, adding that the original sources of the Arizona PAC donation needs to "come on out, come out, come out."

*For more information:*

**Eric Bailey, CAOC Communications Director, 916-201-4849, [ebailey@caoc.org](mailto:ebailey@caoc.org)**