March 8th, 2023

The Honorable Isaac Byran
Chair, Assembly Elections Committee
1020 N Street, Room 365
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 83 (Lee) Get Foreign Money Out of California Elections Act – Support

Dear Chair Bryan,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), one of the state’s foremost grassroots senior and disability advocacy organizations, representing over 1 million Californians, is proud to support AB 83 (Lee), which will target political spending of foreign countries and principals who have ownership stock in United States-based corporations in our elections.

In President George Washington’s farewell address of 1796, he said, “the insidious wiles of foreign influence… prove [to be] one of the most baneful foes of [a] republican government.” This founding philosophy of our nation laid the groundwork to many restrictions around foreign influence in politics we have today.

Under existing federal law, a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign-incorporated corporation, or individual foreign national who is not lawfully admitted for permanent residence is prohibited from spending money on federal, state, or local elections.

Foreign investment in US companies have increased dramatically in recent years. In 1982, foreign investors owned about 5% of all US corporate equity (public and private). By 2019, foreign ownership jumped to an astonishing 40%. Citizens United has given corporations the ability to spend money in our elections based on the premise that corporations are “associations of citizens.” However, for the many companies with shareholders who are foreign owners by federal law, the Supreme Court’s intended ruling in Citizens United is not being properly applied.

It is imperative that we bar foreign-influenced corporations from contributing to candidates, parties, or committees. By closing a loophole that allows corporations partly or wholly owned by foreign interests to spend money in political campaigns, this reform aims to protect the integrity of California’s democratic self-government.

This bill focuses on political spending by foreign-influenced corporations. It does not have any impact on individual immigrants, nor on the vast majority of small and mid-sized businesses that are not partially owned by foreign investors.

CARA/ 1675 7th St. PO Box 23754/ Oakland, CA 94623/ 510-662-4086/ www.californiaalliance.org
Affording Seniors viable resources to age with grace, dignity and independence - such as protecting the integrity of our elections by eliminating loopholes for foreign entities to interfere - not only represent CARA’s foundational principles but we believe will ensure a safer, more accessible and inclusive California for our aging community.

Please vote yes on AB 83.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly  
Chair, Legislative Committee  
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)

Keith Umemoto  
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee  
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)