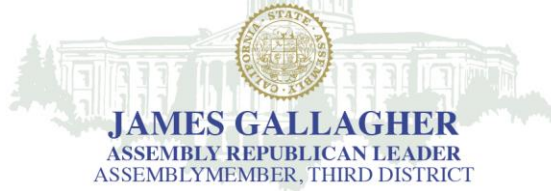


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September 13, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Recommended Veto of SB 955 (Leyva, C)**

Dear Governor Newsom:

I respectfully request a veto of Senate Bill 955, which passed the Assembly on 8/18/22 by a vote of 56 to 16, with 16 members of the Assembly Republican Caucus voting "No."

This bill allows middle and high school students to request to be excused from school to attend various civic or political events, which can include strikes and political rallies, without any guarantee that the parents of that student are aware of the student's absence.

In addition, Senate Bill 955 tramples on local control. Not only does this bill allow a pupil to declare a day off for political activity, but also it prevents a school board from limiting it to only one day. This bill allows a site administrator to excuse as many days as he or she wants to excuse. Just wait for the "UltraMAGA" school principal to allow multiple days off for students to work on the 2024 Trump Campaign and see how quickly this bill gets narrowed.

Further, there is no prohibition for political campaign work. Senate Bill 955 defines the term "civic or political event" to include, but not be limited to, voting, poll working, strikes, public commenting, candidate speeches, political or civic forums, and town halls. This bill does not exclude working at a campaign rally, walking precincts, or even phone banking. It is inappropriate to establish this statute without specifically excluding campaign work for local, state, or federal campaigns.

We risk further alienation between parents and school personnel due the potential for abuse by school staff. It is not difficult to see how students could be persuaded or even feel coerced (through peer pressure) to engage in civic activities favored by their teacher, perhaps to show solidarity in a teacher strike or phone bank for a favored school board candidate. Incentives could be offered; there is nothing stopping a teacher from offering extra-credit for students who participate.

Oddly, this bill applies to students as young as 11 years old. The provisions of this bill would apply to students in either middle school or high school. While high school students may have a better understanding of civic engagement, there is a high likelihood that some 11 year old in 6th grade has no idea what is going on and what they are doing. This statute should have been limited to high school students in grades 11 or 12.

There is no provision for parental agreement or even notification. There is no requirement that a parent must approve of their child leaving school to attend any number of political events. With allowable events running the gambit from voting to attending strikes, it is important that parents have a role in ensuring the safety of their children if they are to be excused from school. It is possible that a student could be excused from school to take part in a political forum or event organized by the Proud Boys or Antifa, and parents would have no idea. To ensure that parents are aware of what their children are doing, and where they are during school hours, this statute should have included a requirement that a parent or guardian submit a note to the school prior to the event granting permission for the child to participate.

For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request that you veto Senate Bill 955.

Sincerely,



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James Gallagher  
Assembly Republican Leader