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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2010

Contact: Tom Lacey, 415-637-3787

LABOR SAYS NO ON PROPOSITION 14!

What: Press Conference

When: Wednesday, May 26, 2010 at Noon

Where: SF Labor Council 1188 Franklin Street, Suite 203

Who: SFLC Executive Director Tim Paulson and representatives from all 6 ballot-qualified political parties

What is Prop. 14?

If passed by the voters, in the June 8th Election, Prop. 14 will impose a “Top Two” system in California. This system will do away with the June partisan primary, and replace it with a system that allows all voters, regardless of how they are registered, to vote for any ballot-qualified candidate. It differs from an “Open Primary” in that only the top two vote getters, regardless of Party, will be on the ballot in November. In the many “safe districts” for Republicans and Democrats in California, this will result in two candidates from the same party competing in the general election...In other words, if you happen to be a registered Democrat in a “Republican” district; sorry: You’ll have to choose between two Republicans.

The official title in the California Vote’s Guide is: “Elections. Increases Right To Participate In Primary Elections.” The reality for the overwhelming majority of voters, will be that Prop. 14 will DECREASE our right to participate in primary elections. It raises the concept of “choosing the lesser evil” to a whole new level. Another side-effect of this poorly conceived constitutional measure is that it outright eliminates “Write-In” candidates, and, because the Election laws in California require Third Party candidates to get at least 2% in the General Election in order to stay on the ballot, it virtually eliminates Third Parties. The likelihood that a Green, Peace and Freedom, Libertarian or American Independent candidate, will be one of the Top Two in the June primary is very small, even if a Third Party or independent candidate got, say, 20% in a five way race, they would not be on the ballot in the General Election.

What About Labor?

This could be a heavy blow for organized labor in California, when combined with the devastating effects of the "Citizens United" Supreme Court decision. The trade unions, who, historically, have been the “boots on the ground” for progressive campaigns, would be unable to compete in this kind of jury-rigged system.

Who’s Behind Prop. 14?

Prop 14 was put on the ballot through the backroom dealings of State Senator (now Lt. Gov.) Abel Maldonado. One of his demands, to place this measure on the ballot, was granted in order to pass a budget. The big money behind this measure can be seen on the California Secretary of State’s website. Contributors read like a Who’s Who of California’s biggest corporations and business trade associations: BNSF Railway Company, California Chamber of Commerce, Hewlett-Packard Company, National Semiconductor Corp., Pacific Life Insurance Company,

and Shea Homes, and, not to be outdone, Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, himself. These are among the corporate interests that would hijack California's election system.

Has "Top Two" been tested in any other state?

Versions of this scheme are currently in place in two other states: Louisiana and Washington State. In Washington, out of 123 legislative races, only one incumbent lost in the last general election. Quipped Peace and Freedom Party's candidate for Lt. Governor, C.T. Weber, "They could have called it the 'Incumbent's Insurance Act'."

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