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'Protect Our Homes' closer to spot on ballot

More than 1 million signatures submitted for anti- eminent-domain measure

Sometimes you can tell the significance of a particular bill or initiative by the stridency of the opposition against it. This week, supporters of the Protect Our Homes Initiative submitted more than 1 million signatures to the state, more than enough to put the anti- eminent-domain measure before voters in November.

In response, the League of California Cities, an advocate for the use of eminent domain, has issued a statement blasting the initiative and saying that there "is a more responsible way to provide homeowners with needed protections against the use of eminent domain. We will continue to work with key legislators, environmental advocates, business and labor organizations, education groups and taxpayer advocates to develop and enact eminent-domain protections that do not shift unreasonably high costs to taxpayers and limit important programs that protect our environment, our communities and our quality of life."

That "responsible way" means no meaningful reform at all.

State initiative chairperson, Assemblywoman Mimi Walters, R-Laguna Niguel, captured the importance of the measure when she said, in a statement, "It is time to end the [alliance]between local governments and special interests that sacrifice the property rights of the average citizen in order to line the coffers of government and the pockets of the powerful." She wants to restore eminent domain to its constitutional purpose: for public uses such as roads and courthouses.

In California, and across the country, cities routinely use eminent domain to take homes and businesses from their current owners and give them to big developers simply to enhance the tax base. Protect Our Homes offers the best chance to do what its title suggests: protect homeowners from tax-seeking city officials' abuse of eminent domain.

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