

California Official Sues to Bar Balloting on Farm Labor Curb

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SACRAMENTO, Calif., Sept. 18—Secretary of State Edmund G. Brown Jr. filed a suit in the Sacramento County Superior Court last week asking that a controversial farm labor initiative be removed from the Nov. 7 California election ballot.

In his suit, Mr. Brown, California's chief elections official, said that forgery and "massive fraud" had been used to get signatures to qualify Proposition 22 for consideration by voters.

Basically, the proposition, sponsored by California agricultural business interests, would outlaw boycotts of farm products and would require secret ballots in farm labor organizing elections. It is strongly opposed by Cesar Chavez's United Farmworkers Organizing Committee and the California Labor Federation.

Mr. Brown said that investigations by his office and District Attorneys in 10 of California's 58 counties had prompted him to seek a court order removing the issue from the ballot.

According to Mr. Brown, signatures of voters on the initiative petitions were "unlawfully obtained by means of fraud on a scale unprecedented in the history of California."

Charges Are Rebutted

The charges made by Mr. Brown in the lawsuit were described as "unproven" by the Fair Labor Practices Committee, which reported expenditures of \$240,000 to qualify the initiative for the ballot.

"The signatures were gathered by a reputable firm," said O. W. Fillerup, executive vice president of the California Council of Growers, a leading supporter of the initiative. "A spokesman for the Fair Labor Practices Committee has stated there was no wrongdoing in gathering the signatures. The only people making this un-

proved charge seem to be liberal politicians running for office and opponents of the measure."

His statement was an allusion to speculation that Mr. Brown will run for Governor in 1974.

Mr. Brown said that he hoped to obtain an early court hearing on his suit because of the need to have the election ballot printed soon.

Misrepresentation Charged

"We have uncovered evidence that supporters of Proposition 22 misrepresented the initiative while circulating petitions to place it on the ballot, concealed the Attorney General's official summary of the measure and even forged signatures on the petitions," he declared. "The voters of California were victimized and today's court action seeks the only possible remedy—removal of Proposition 22 from the ballot."

Mr. Brown said that District Attorneys were investigating to determine whether criminal charges could be brought.

The elections official, a Democrat who is the son of former Gov. Edmund G. Brown, said that many persons had signed petitions only after being told that the initiative would establish a minimum wage for farm workers and was supported by Mr. Chavez and his union.

"In fact, the measure would not establish a minimum wage and it is strongly opposed by Chavez," Mr. Brown said.

He pointed out Section 29214 of the State Elections Code made it a crime to make false statements concerning the contents of a petition so as to obtain signatures.