



Taxpayer-funded lobbyists oppose diaper tax break as bill advances

By [Alice Salles](#)

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A bill that would give diapers a free pass on California's high sales tax could improve the state's serious poverty rate—the [highest](#) in the country.

[Assembly Bill 717](#), introduced in February and amended in assembly on May 21, could provide some financial relief for low-income parents in California. The Golden State has one of the [highest sales taxes](#) in the country. If AB-717 passes, taxes on the sales of diapers for infants and toddlers will be eliminated statewide.

The proposal, co-authored by the El Cajon Republican Sen. Joel Anderson, was introduced by Democratic Assemblywoman from San Diego, Lorena Gonzalez. The bipartisan alliance comes at a delicate time for California.. According to Gonzalez, “we need to do more to help young families.”

In a [press release](#), the San Diego Democrat defended the bill by saying that the diaper tax repeal would save poor families “about \$100 annually,” an amount that makes a huge difference to families who “are just beginning to deal with the added costs of raising a child.” After the California Assembly Committee on Revenue and Taxation voted 9-0 to pass AB-717 on May 20, it was sent to Committee on Appropriations where it still awaits for a review.

But to the [taxpayer-funded](#) lobbying organization California State Association of Counties, local mothers who [support](#) the bill are misguided. To CSAC, AB-717 poses a [threat](#) to the maintenance of [CalWORKS](#), a welfare program that provides short-term financial aid to needy families. Instead of supporting legislation that would assist families by allowing them to afford necessities such as diapers, the lobbying organization wants to keep the tax in place to benefit a government-run program [criticized](#) in the past for forcing poor families to make unsound decisions in order to qualify for assistance.

According to Ballotpedia, CSAC has spent \$1,160,000 on [lobbying efforts](#) since 2000. The advocacy group has an annual operating budget of \$8.7 million, which is entirely comprised of county supervisors. On its official website, CSAC [claims](#) to place “a strong emphasis on educating the public about the value and need for county programs and services.”

CSAC cites an estimated [\\$46.7 million loss](#) in state and local tax revenue if the bill becomes law.

When discussing taxpayer-funded lobbying, Cato Institute’s Executive Vice-President David Boaz [alluded](#) to Thomas Jefferson’s writings in the founding father’s Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty. Jefferson says that “[t]o compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical.”

For the diaper tax exemption to become law, the bill must be approved by the appropriations panel, the full Assembly, the Senate, and signed by Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown this year.