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April 1, 2019

Assembly Member Laura Friedman
State Capitol
Room 2137
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SPJ NorCal Opposition to AB 700

Dear Assembly Member Friedman

I write on behalf of the Northern California Society of Professional Journalists (“SPJ NorCal”) to express our opposition to AB 700. We strongly urges you to drop the bill.

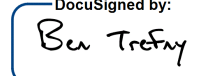
The California Public Records Act is critical for journalists to be able to investigate taxpayer funded work. AB 700 would weaken the Act by exempting research taking place at the state’s public universities. The spotlight journalists provide in the public interest should shine more brightly in areas where malfeasance can possibly take place, yet AB 700 seeks to turn the light out in a critical setting. This is not only problematic at the university level; it could also set a precedent through which other exemptions are sought and achieved, thereby making investigative journalism even more challenging than it already is.

In case you’re not aware, I’d like to let you know about the [code of ethics](#) for the Society of Professional Journalists. It states that journalists should:

- Seek truth and report it
- Minimize harm
- Act independently
- Be accountable and transparent

We are in this work for the same noble purpose that elected officials should have: to serve the public to the best of our ability. Whatever your motivation is in sponsoring AB 700, it is our duty to let you know that we believe it will damage our profession. Please don’t allow that to happen. To protect the ability of journalists to do their work protecting the public, SPJ NorCal urges you to drop AB 700.

Thank you for your consideration.

DocuSigned by:

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Ben Trefny, President, SPJ NorCal