Update from Sacramento

Lea-Ann Tratten
CAOC POLITICAL DIRECTOR

CAOC is fighting back against the Uber initiative

INITIATIVE WOULD LIMIT CONTINGENCY FEES AND RECOVERY OF MEDICAL COSTS IN AUTO ACCIDENTS

On October 3, 2025 Uber filed a deceptive ballot initiative that would fundamentally weaken the rights of vehicle accident victims across California. The initiative limits automobile and truck accident victims' recovery of medical expenses, restricts the ability of victims to hire an attorney of their choice on a contingency fee basis (while leaving Uber's defense-side fees untouched), and rewrites long-standing liability standards to benefit a multi-billion-dollar corporation.

This deeply misleading initiative would make it harder for injured Californians to obtain medical care and secure legal representation after an accident. By capping medical recovery and discouraging attorneys from representing injured victims, the measure stacks the deck in favor of Uber and against passengers and drivers who have been harmed. This initiative is part of a broader effort by Uber to evade accountability and put company profits ahead of passenger safety and victim protection. In response, the Alliance Against Corporate Abuse (AACA), sponsored by Consumer Attorneys of California, filed three counter initiatives to protect victims, strengthen public safety, and hold rideshare companies accountable.

Three counter initiatives

The first is the People's Right to Contract With Counsel of Choice Act. This would be a constitutional amendment that directly counters Uber's measure by protecting Californians' right to hire an attorney of their choice. The initiative prevents corporate interference in attorney-client relationships and ensures existing safeguards against excessive or unlawful fees remain in place.

The second is the Sexual Assault Against Rideshare Passengers and Drivers Prevention and Accountability Act. This would strengthen protections for riders and drivers by requiring rigorous background checks, including fingerprinting, and public reporting of sexual misconduct incidents so riders and drivers are aware of risks in Uber vehicles. This initiative also classifies rideshare companies as "common carriers" under California law, requiring them to exercise a heightened standard of care for their passengers.

The third and final counter initiative is the Rideshare Company Public Accountability Act, which ensures rideshare companies are held to the same standards as other transportation providers by classifying them as common carriers and making them legally responsible for harm caused by their drivers. The initiative closes liability loopholes and makes corporations legally responsible for injuries to passengers or the public, regardless of whether the driver is an employee or independent contractor.

Raising $50 million to fight the Uber Initiative

CAOC and AACA immediately sprang into action, assembling a veteran campaign team with a track record of success and setting a bold goal of raising $50 million before the end of 2025. Our coalition worked quickly to rally support and exceeded that goal, *raising more than $50 million in just two months*. Our allies at Providers for Patient Care raised more than $4 million to further support the fight against Uber's attack on access to justice and medical care. While the campaign is still in its early stages, we are already demonstrating that Californians are prepared to come together to stand up to a powerful corporation and ensure that Uber does not rig the system and evade accountability.

Bombshell – a sexual assault reported every 8 minutes

We know that we have Uber's attention. Following Uber's initiative filing, the Every 8 Minutes campaign was launched, highlighting a bombshell New York Times report that found Uber received a report of sexual assault or misconduct almost every eight minutes. Rather than addressing these concerns with common-sense safety protocols, Uber attempted to stifle these public warnings and delay an upcoming bellwether trial in sexual assault litigation.

Recently, a federal judge denied Uber's attempt to stop the ads and stop a trial holding Uber accountable regarding an alleged rape. The court's decision underscores a clear pattern: Uber seeks to silence warnings about the sexual assault crisis in their vehicles and skirt accountability, while CAOC continues to push for transparency, consumer protection, and corporate responsibility.

Uber has signaled its willingness to spend heavily to protect its profits and escape accountability. Our coalition is prepared for a long fight and is building the infrastructure, resources, and public support necessary to ensure that Californians' access to medical care and justice is protected. With titles and summaries in hand, the campaign entered the signature-gathering phase. Our focus in the coming months will center on collecting the millions of signatures required to qualify the counter initiatives for the November 2026 ballot and ensuring voters have a clear, affirmative alternative to Uber's measure.

A great team to lead the campaign

The Alliance Against Corporate Abuse Campaign has assembled a veteran campaign team with a track record of success. Campaign manager Erica Kwiatkowski Nielsen has more than a decade of experience in political campaigns, media management, and team leadership, advising on multi-million-dollar campaigns nationwide. Consultants Dan Newman, Brian Brokaw, and Emily Matthews bring decades of experience in campaign consulting, media relations, and political advertising across California and nationally, having won and defeated initiatives that have sought to redefine policies on taxes, corporate regulation, education, gun safety, housing, criminal justice, and climate. Paul Maslin and Rick Sklarz are nationally recognized public opinion analysts, with more than 30 years of experience.

Now, more than ever, our community must stay informed on the political battles ahead. To contact the campaign and for education and communication resources, contact campaign@caoc.org.