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## **California Legislators Propose Hostile Takeover of UC System**

A bipartisan pair of legislators, angered by what they see as long-running mismanagement of the University of California, have proposed a drastic solution: deprive the school of the autonomy it has enjoyed for over 160 years.

Sens. Ricardo Lara, a Democrat, and Anthony Cannella, a Republican, say the University currently lacks transparency or financial accountability and requires more oversight from the state. They are angry at the school for raising tuition, boosting the pay of its top executives, and for not admitting a higher number of native California residents. Lara's office also told the San Francisco Chronicle that he was bothered by the University using its autonomy to avoid following local minimum-wage ordinances in cities such as Berkeley.

"It behooves us, and ultimately the voters, to revisit the concentrated power and autonomy of the UC Board of Regents which appears to be out of touch with average working class families," said Lara in a statement.

Although a public institution, control of the University of California rests with a board of regents appointed to twelve-year terms by the governor. Oversight by California's legislature is non-existent, except to the extent that it provides billions of dollars in state subsidies every year. Even when required to by law, the university has frequently resisted any sort of state meddling in its affairs.

For example, the school [has thus far ignored](#) a 2013 law requiring it to disclose how much money it spends educating graduate students compared to undergraduates, missing multiple deadlines.

The new amendment would greatly curtail the school's power to do that. While the board of regents would stay in place, the legislature would now be able to directly veto any of its decision, such as a tuition increase. Lawmakers would also be able to pass new legislation further controlling the school "as may be necessary to ensure the security of its funds and compliance with the terms of the endowments of the university."

Despite the initial bipartisan backing, the amendment is a longshot: Two-thirds of both houses would need to approve, and it would then have to pass muster with California voters in 2016. A similar measure was proposed in 2009, and failed to win legislative approval.

Nonetheless, its odds are likely better today than at any time in the recent past. Democratic dissatisfaction with the UC system has been growing over its repeated clashes with state government and Democratic education priorities. Last month, the school's board of regents approved plans to hike tuition by as much as 28 percent over the next five years. The increase came just two months after the regents approved big pay increases for the chancellors of the school's ten different campuses.

The regents' actions have upset leading Democrats in the state. Governor Jerry Brown and State Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, ex officio members of the Board of Regents, both voted against the tuition increase, with Brown arguing the school must learn to live within its means rather than gobbling up more money.

Heightened state oversight of the university would not be unprecedented in California. The California State University system, the state's other major network of four-year college, has the level of legislative oversight Lara and Cannella are seeking.

UC spokesman Steve Montiel issued a statement condemning the proposal, saying it was a distraction that would do nothing to make the school more affordable or accessible to California residents.