

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1194

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As Reported By House Committee On:  
State Government

**Title:** An act relating to public campaign financing.

**Brief Description:** Restoring the ability of local governments to regulate campaign spending through campaign financing systems.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Anderson, Thibaudeau, Jacobsen, Sommers, Rust, J. Kohl, G. Cole, Appelwick, Leonard, King, Johanson, R. Meyers, Linville, Franklin, Locke and Pruitt.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
State Government, February 4, 1993, DP.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Campbell; King; and Pruitt.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Dyer.

**Staff:** Ken Hirst (786-7105).

**Background:** In 1972, the voters of this state approved Initiative Measure No. 276 regarding public disclosure. One section of the initiative established mandatory expenditure limits on campaigns for elective office. In 1974, the state's Supreme Court found that section to be unconstitutional.

A series of federal court cases has identified a number of constitutional limitations on the regulation of campaign financing. Among the governmental restrictions found in those cases to be impermissible were ceilings on campaign spending by candidates. However, upheld were ceilings on candidate expenditures which become effective only as part of a public financing agreement under which a candidate agrees to abide by the limits in exchange for public financing.

Public financing assistance has been used as part of a campaign spending limitation program in Seattle and in King County. The state's Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of Seattle's use of public monies in its program. However, last November, the voters of this state approved Initiative to the Legislature No. 134 which contains a statutory prohibition against the use of public monies in financing campaigns for state or local office.

**Summary of Bill:** The prohibition in Initiative 134 against the use of public funds in financing political campaigns for local offices is repealed.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** (1) Successful campaign reform programs around the nation have all of the following elements: disclosure, contribution limits, and spending limits through public financing assistance. Without all of these elements, the cost of campaigns will increase. (2) The bill returns to local units of government the ability to determine the programs that work locally. Seattle and King County voters have approved and supported the public financing - spending limit programs that are prohibited by Initiative 134. (3) When the voters approved Initiative 134, they were voting for campaign reform, not for abolishing the Seattle and King County systems. (4) Seattle City Light customers approve the campaign financing system of the city through the "check-off" for the system that appears on their billing statements. They consistently provide more monies than are needed for providing matching funds. (4) Seattle's spending limit and matching money program encourages challengers to run against incumbents. (5) Spending limits provide a stronger democracy. The bill will help fight the public's distrust of the political system.

**Testimony Against:** The official ballot title for Initiative 134 included the question: shall public funding of state and local campaigns be prohibited? The committee that supported the adoption of the initiative did not support removing this portion of the initiative. The initiative, with this ballot title, was approved by 72 percent of the voters.

**Witnesses:** Carolyn Van Noy, Elections Division, City of Seattle (in favor); Jan Drago (in favor); Mary Murphy, League of Women Voters of Washington (in favor); Lonnie Johns Brown, CURES and National Coalition of Women - Washington (in favor); Chuck Sauvage, Common Cause (in favor); Representative Dunshee (in favor); and Lance

Henderson, Washington State Republican Party (in support of Initiative 134).