

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5399

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE, FEBRUARY 19, 1993

Brief Description: Authorizing voluntary campaign spending limits.

SPONSORS: Senators Quigley, Haugen, A. Smith, Sutherland, Fraser, Prince, McAuliffe, Deccio, Bauer, Drew, Talmadge, Loveland, Rinehart, Gaspard, Snyder, Jesernig, von Reichbauer, Winsley, Niemi, Prentice, Vognild, Spanel, Pelz and Sheldon

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5399 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators A. Smith, Chairman; Quigley, Vice Chairman; Niemi, Rinehart, and Spanel.

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Nelson, and Roach.

Staff: Alan Caplan (786-7465)

Hearing Dates: February 12, 1993; February 19, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Initiative 134, which was approved by Washington voters on November 3, 1992, among other things imposed limits on campaign contributions to candidates for state office. The stated purposes of the initiative were (1) to give individuals and interest groups equal opportunities to influence elective and governmental processes; (2) to reduce the influence of large organizational contributors; and (3) to restore public trust in governmental institutions and the electoral process.

Some groups interested in campaign issues have argued that Initiative 134 is unlikely to achieve these goals, in part because it does not limit campaign spending. These groups have maintained that, so long as campaign spending remains unchecked, special interests will have the opportunity to unduly influence the legislative process, and people of modest means will be discouraged from seeking public office.

SUMMARY:

The original bill was not considered.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

Voluntary campaign expenditure limits are established for candidates seeking state office, and candidates must indicate

whether they accept or reject such limits within specified time periods.

The initial expenditure limits are as follows:

Governor: \$2,000,000
All other state executive offices: \$500,000
Supreme Court justice: \$200,000
Court of Appeals judge: \$80,000
Superior court judge: \$80,000
State senator: \$80,000
State representative: \$50,000

The Public Disclosure Commission is authorized to adjust expenditure limits at two year intervals.

Candidates for state office, and public officials and political committees participating in recall campaigns are prohibited from accepting campaign contributions that exceed specified levels.

Applicable contribution limits vary depending on whether participant has accepted voluntary expenditure limits.

Inconsistent provisions of Initiative 134 are stricken.

Political parties and state legislative caucuses may not accept contributions from individuals that exceed specified levels.

Civil remedies and sanctions are provided for candidates who accept, and then exceed, expenditure limits.

The inclusion of a candidate's picture and statement in the voters' pamphlet is conditioned on the candidate's acceptance of voluntary expenditure limits.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Campaign spending is out of control. High campaign costs give political committees too much power, favor incumbents and decrease individual participation in government.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

The reforms contained in Initiative 134 are sufficient and should be given an opportunity to work. Spending limits favor incumbents and may be unconstitutional. Access to voters' pamphlet should not be restricted.

TESTIFIED: Senator Quigley, prime sponsor; Senator Linda Smith; Esther Milligan; Mike Watters; Charles Rus; Steve Babcock; Les

Abbenhouse; Irene Heninger, Public Disclosure Commission;
Chuck Sauvage, Common Cause of Washington; Tom Casey, Grange;
Ron Avril; Margaret Colony, League of Women Voters