

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5272

As Reported By House Committee On:
Government Administration

Title: An act relating to the citizen members of the legislative ethics board.

Brief Description: Limiting political activities of citizen members of the legislative ethics board.

Sponsors: Senators Long, Spanel and Horn; by request of Legislative Ethics Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 3/28/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Dunshee; Reams; Smith; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background: The Legislative Ethics Board was created in 1994 and consists of five citizen members, two senators, and two representatives. The board issues advisory opinions and hears complaints with respect to legislators and legislative employees, and ethics in public service.

The citizen members of the Legislative Ethics Board are prohibited from holding or campaigning for partisan elective office or full-time nonpartisan office; serving as an officer of a political party or a political committee; allowing his or her name to be used, or making contributions, in support of or in opposition to any state candidate or ballot measure; or lobbying the Legislature except that a member may appear before a legislative committee on matters pertaining to the board. A citizen member of the board may serve as a precinct committee person.

A citizen member of the Legislative Ethics Board is not prohibited from making contributions, or allowing his or her name to be used in connection with state legislative races, nor is that member prohibited from campaigning for a seat in the

state Legislature, against an incumbent who was a respondent in a complaint before the board within two years of serving on the board.

Summary of Bill: Citizen members of the Legislative Ethics Board are prohibited from: holding or campaigning for partisan elective office or any full-time nonpartisan office; serving as an officer of a political party or political committee; allowing his or her name to be used or making contributions in support of or opposition to any legislative candidate, any legislative caucus campaign committee that supports or opposes legislative candidates, or any political action committee that supports or opposes legislative candidates; or lobbying the Legislature under circumstances that are not exempt from lobbyist registration and reporting. Citizen members of the Legislative Ethics Board may serve as a precinct committee person.

In addition, citizen members of the Legislative Ethics Board may not hold or campaign for a seat in the state Legislature within two years of serving on the board if a citizen member opposes an incumbent who has been the respondent of a complaint before the board.

The prohibition against a citizen member of the Legislative Ethics Board from allowing his or her name to be used, or making contributions, in support of or in opposition to any state candidate or state ballot measure is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This distinguishes the types of behavior prohibited by members of the Legislative Ethics Board and the Executive Ethics Board. This will allow some participation in statewide races but prohibits participation in legislative races. The two-year moratorium on running for legislative office is narrowly drawn to apply when a member would have access to confidential information about his or her opponent. All ethics board members support this measure.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Jeanine Long, prime sponsor.