

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2781

Title: AN ACT Relating to spending in election campaigns.

Brief Description: Creating a program of voluntary campaign spending limits for state offices.

Sponsor: Dunshee, Murray.

BRIEF SUMMARY

- Requires the development and implementation of voluntary campaign expenditure limits.

HOUSE STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191)

BACKGROUND:

Initiative 134, approved by the voters in 1993, imposed contribution limits upon persons making contributions to candidates running for public office. In addition, Initiative 276, approved by the voters in 1972, required candidates to make disclosures to the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) regarding contributions and expenditures. The PDC is responsible for enforcing the contribution limits and disclosure requirements.

There are no statutory provisions limiting independent expenditures in a political campaign. In 1976, the United States Supreme Court ruled that mandatory expenditure limits violated the free speech protections of the First Amendment.

SUMMARY:

The PDC must adopt recommended spending limits for certain elected offices including Governor, Secretary of State, and member of the Senate or House of Representatives. The PDC must base the spending limits on the average spending of the candidates receiving the highest and second highest number of votes in the 2000 general election, unless the PDC finds that such limits would be unrealistic. The PDC must biennially adjust the spending limits based on inflation.

A candidate may file a promise with the PDC to stay within the recommended limits. The promise is binding and can result in civil penalties. The candidate must file the promise no later than the tenth day after the close of the filing period for the office.

The PDC must compile a list of candidates promising to stay within the recommended

limits. The list must be available to the media and the public. During an election campaign, the PDC must periodically publish a list identifying each candidate who has executed a promise to stay within the recommended limits.

The Secretary of State must add information regarding the recommended limits to the voters' pamphlet. The voters' pamphlet must also include a statement identifying whether each candidate has filed a promise with the PDC.

Rule Making Authority: No express authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 31, 2000.

Effective Date: January 1, 2001.