
State Government Committee

HB 1917

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

Sponsors: Representative Dunshee.

Brief Summary of Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Creates a voluntary program of campaign spending limits for certain state-wide elections.

Hearing Date: 1/17/02

Staff: Catherine Blinn (786-7114).

Background:

Current campaign finance laws limit individual campaign contributions to a candidate for state legislative office to \$625, and to a candidate for governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, commissioner of public lands, insurance commissioner, superintendent of public instruction, state auditor and state treasurer to \$1250. The limit applies for each election that the candidate appears on the ballot.

Mandatory limits on campaign spending have been held to restrict political speech, thereby violating the First Amendment, by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) and the state Supreme Court in *Bare v. Gorton* (1974). However, campaign spending limits that are voluntary, rather than mandatory, are permitted.

Summary of Bill:

Candidates for the state offices that are currently subject to contribution limits may voluntarily participate in a program to limit campaign spending. The program is open to candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, commissioner of public lands, insurance commissioner, superintendent of public instruction, state auditor, state treasurer, state senate, and state house of representatives. The public disclosure commission must consider the average amount spent by the two candidates in each election who received the most votes in the 2000 general election when setting the

recommended spending limits for each office. The limit is adjusted biennially for inflation.

Each candidate wishing to participate in the program must sign a promise within ten days after the end of the filing period, promising that he or she will stay within the designated spending limit. The public disclosure commission must compile a list of the candidates who promised to comply with the limits, and make the list available to the media and to the public. Any candidate who violates the spending limit will be removed from the list.

The Secretary of State must include in the voters' pamphlet the recommended campaign spending limits for each office eligible for the program, and a brief explanation of the effect of a candidate's promise to abide by the limit. The following notation must be included by each candidate who promises to abide by the limit: "Has promised to abide by the voluntary spending limit for this campaign." The following notation must be included by each candidate who is not participating in the program: "Has **NOT** promised to abide by the voluntary spending limit for this campaign."

Rulemaking Authority: No express authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2002.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2002.