

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1103

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
State & Local Government, March 26, 2001

Title: An act relating to restrictions on mailing by legislators.

Brief Description: Regulating mail to constituents.

Sponsors: By Representatives Lambert (co-prime sponsor), Ruderman (co-prime sponsor), Esser, Miloscia, Buck, Pflug, McDermott, Simpson, D. Schmidt and Armstrong.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State & Local Government: 3/15/01, 3/26/01 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chair; Fairley, Vice Chair; Gardner, Hale, Horn, McCaslin, T. Sheldon and Swecker.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: For the 12 month period preceding a general election in which a legislator is running for office, the legislator may not send to a constituent, either by regular mail or electronic mail, a letter, newsletter, brochure, or other piece of literature. There are several exceptions to this general rule:

- (a) The legislator may send two newsletters during the 12 month period.
- (b) The legislator may mail an individual letter to (i) a constituent who holds a government office having jurisdiction over the subject of the letter; and (ii) a constituent who has won an award or honor of extraordinary distinction such as the Nobel Prize or the Pulitzer Prize.

Summary of Amended Bill: Electronic communications in an election year prior to the 45 days after the legislative session ends and subsequent to the December 1 prior to the legislator's election are permitted if their costs are de minimis as defined by the Ethics Board.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The striking amendment clarifies that only electronic communications involving de minimis costs to state government as defined by the Ethics Board are permitted within the period beginning December 1 prior to a legislator's election and ending 45 days after the end of session.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Honest communication between legislators and constituents is the backbone of our participatory democracy. People need information during election years; our legislators should not be under a gag order of these election times. (This is also from written testimony provided by Chuck Sauvage of Common Cause.)

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Rep. Lambert, co-prime sponsor (pro).