

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5556

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
State & Local Government, February 19, 2001

Title: An act relating to the use of public assets for political purposes.

Brief Description: Protecting public assets from political use.

Sponsors: Senators T. Sheldon, Prentice, Roach, Rasmussen, Franklin and McCaslin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State & Local Government: 2/5/01, 2/19/01 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5556 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Aaron Jennings (786-7445)

Background: Public funds, supplies, or facilities cannot be used to finance or assist political campaigns for state or local office.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Public funds cannot be used to promote or oppose any ballot proposition. An association or nonprofit corporation that derives 25 percent or more of its income from public funds, and a majority of its officers or members are public officials, may not provide any financial support or use its facilities for or against a ballot proposition, to assist a political committee, or to assist a candidate for public office. An association may, at an open meeting, express a collective position or prepare factual information relating to a specific ballot proposition.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill did not contain the exception allowing an association to meet, so it may express a collective position or prepare factual information relating to a specific ballot proposition.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This is a matter of fairness; associations have more money. Government officials already are not allowed to use public funds to support or oppose a ballot measure; neither should associations of public officials.

Testimony Against: Associations of public officials already are subject to the ban of the use of public funds to support or oppose a ballot measure, there is no need to codify it. Associations should be allowed to use nonpublic funds to support or oppose a ballot measure.

Testified: PRO: Paul Telford, Ken Bragg, Citizens for Responsible Government. CON: Bill Vogler, Washington State Association of Counties; Fred Saeger, Washington Association of County Officials; Jim Justin, AWC; Pat Jones, Washington Public Ports Association; Stu Trefry, Washington P.U.D. Association.