

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1670

As Passed House:

March 14, 2003

Title: An act relating to election cycles.

Brief Description: Adjusting the definition of "election cycle."

Sponsors: By Representatives McDermott, Armstrong, Sommers, Haigh, Kessler, Nixon, Hatfield, Wood, Hunt, Tom, Wallace and Shabro.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/20/03, 2/28/03 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/14/03, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- The election cycle is changed to begin on the first day of January after the date of the last previous general election for the office that the candidate seeks, and ends on December 31 after the next election for the office. In the case of a special election to fill a vacancy in an office, the election cycle begins on the day the vacancy occurs and ends on December 31 after the special election.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Shabro, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Nixon, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The Fair Campaign Practices Act, enacted as part of Initiative 134 in 1992, imposes campaign contribution limits on elections for state office. The primary intent of the legislation was to: 1) ensure that individuals and interest groups have fair and equal

opportunity to influence elective and governmental processes; 2) reduce the influence of large organizational contributors; and 3) restore public trust in the electoral process. The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) is responsible for enforcing campaign finance laws.

Under this law, candidates are limited to the amounts of money they may accept for each election from individuals, a political party, or a caucus political committee. For example, a candidate for a state legislative office may receive a contribution of not more than \$625 for the primary, and an additional \$625 for the general election from the same individual.

The law also delineates the time periods that contributions may be accepted. Contributions made with respect to a primary may not be made after the date of the primary. However, contributions may be made to a candidate or to his or her authorized committee until 30 days after the primary if the candidate lost the primary and there are insufficient funds to pay outstanding debts. Contributions raised may only be used to satisfy the outstanding debt.

For a general election, contributions may not be accepted after the final day of the election cycle. The election cycle begins on the first day of December after the date of the last previous general election for the office that the candidate seeks, and ends on November 30 after the next election for the office. In the case of a special election to fill a vacancy, the election cycle begins on the day the vacancy occurs and ends on November 30 after the special election.

Summary of Bill:

The election cycle is changed to begin on the first day of January after the date of the last previous general election for the office that the candidate seeks, and ends on December 31 after the next election for the office. In the case of a special election to fill a vacancy in an office, the election cycle begins on the day the vacancy occurs and ends on December 31 after the special election.

The effect of this change would allow candidates to raise money until December 31 following the date of the general election, or an additional 31 days. However, state officials are barred from accepting contributions 30 days before the beginning of a regular legislative session; therefore, the period for accepting contributions would be extended approximately two weeks.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The intent of the bill is to align the campaign cycle with when our legislative session begins and with what is happening, financially, with campaigns. The campaign cycle closes at the end of November and the proper forms are filed. New campaigns begin and new forms are filed, then two weeks later, the 30-day freeze on acceptance of campaign contributions begins. Changing the election cycle to begin on January 1 would allow incumbent legislators a few extra weeks to close out old campaigns and start new campaigns before the freeze is in effect.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative McDermott, prime sponsor.