

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5291

---

---

As of February 24, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to the Washington clean elections act.

**Brief Description:** Enacting the Washington clean elections act.

**Sponsors:** Senator Kastama.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/25/03.

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

**Background:** While current law limits the amount of money individuals and organizations can contribute to candidates for public office, there is no limitation on independent expenditures or on the amount of personal money candidates can spend in their campaigns. It has been argued that current campaign finance law undermines public confidence in the integrity of elected officials and discourages candidates who lack personal wealth or access to special interest funding from running for office.

**Summary of Bill:** The Washington Clean Elections Act is established as an alternative campaign financing option available to candidates running for state senator and state representative. The fund is financed entirely through voluntary donations and administered by the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC).

A participating candidate cannot accept campaign contributions other than qualifying contributions as specified; make expenditures from the candidate's personal funds; or make expenditures in the primary or general election periods greater than the spending limit.

To be certified as a participating candidate under the act, the candidate must submit an application to the PDC that provides the name, and any other information required by the PDC, of at least 200 persons who have made qualifying contributions along with an amount equal to the qualifying contributions collected by the candidate. A participating candidate must also submit a statement signed by the candidate under oath, certifying that the candidate has complied, and will continue to comply, with the restrictions of the chapter; will not accept private campaign contributions; and will use all money received from the clean elections account exclusively for financing his or her primary or general election campaign.

A qualifying contribution is a \$25 contribution made during the qualifying period by an elector who has not given another contribution to that candidate during the election cycle and was not given anything of value in exchange for the contribution.

By January 1 of each election year, the PDC must publish an estimate of revenue in the account available for distribution. The PDC can use up to 10 percent of the money in the account for reasonable and necessary expenses of administration and enforcement and another 10 percent for voter education. One-half of the account is distributed to participating candidates at the primary and one-half at the general election. Distributions are made twice during the appropriate election period on a pro rata share based on the number of participating candidates.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 21, 2003.

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