
**State Government Operations &
Accountability Committee**

SSB 6323

Brief Description: Concerning campaign finance disclosure.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Regala, Swecker, Kastama and Rasmussen).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires a candidate for city or town mayor or council to report campaign contributions and expenditures if that candidate receives or expects to receive \$3,500 or more in contributions.

Hearing Date: 2/17/06

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

In 1972, the Public Disclosure Act (PDA) was enacted following passage of Initiative 276. Among the stated purposes of the legislation were that political campaign and lobbying contributions and expenditures be fully disclosed to the public and that the private financial dealings of public officials, and candidates for those offices, present no conflict of interest between the public trust and private interest. The Public Disclosure Commission (Commission) is responsible for enforcement of the PDA.

Two reporting provisions are included in the PDA to address those concerns. One provision requires that all political campaign and lobbying contributions and expenditures be fully disclosed. The law applies to all election campaigns with the following exceptions:

- precinct committee office;
- federal elective office; and
- office in a political subdivision of the state that does not encompass a whole county and that contains fewer than five thousand registered voters as of the date of the most recent election.

The other reporting provision requires that all public officials and candidates for public office submit a statement of personal financial affairs. Exceptions for filing this report include:

- precinct committee office;
- federal elective office; and

- candidates, elected officials and agencies in political subdivisions with less than 1,000 registered voters.

Any exempted political subdivision may petition for disclosure of contributions and expenditures and/or personal financial statements. In order to be validated, the petition must include signatures of at least 15 percent of the registered voters as of the date of the most recent general election in the political subdivision and submit the petition to the Commission. Signatures are verified by the county auditor or elections officer of the county in which the political subdivision is located.

Once the correct number of required signatures is verified, the Commission is required to notify every known affected person to file the required statements and reports within 14 days of the date of the order.

Petitions for reporting political campaign contributions and expenditures must be filed at least 60 days before the election at which a ballot measure is considered. Petitions for reporting campaign contributions and expenditures for candidates running in an election must be filed 60 days before the first day of the filing period.

Summary of Bill:

Campaign contributions and expenditures must be reported by a candidate in an election for city or town mayor or council if the candidate receives or expects to receive \$3500 or more in contributions.

The 60-day period in which a political subdivision may petition for disclosure to the Commission for both ballot measures and candidate reporting is removed.

House Bill Compared to Senate Bill:

Under House Bill 2846, if a candidate in any political subdivision receives or expects to receive \$5,000 or more in contributions, he or she must report campaign contributions and expenditures and file a personal financial affairs statement as required under the PDA. The Senate bill requires candidates for city or town mayor or council to report contributions if that candidate receives or expects to receive \$3,500 or more in contributions. The Senate bill also removes the 60-day petition filing period for political subdivisions wishing to adopt reporting provisions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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