

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6323

As Passed Senate, February 9, 2006

Title: An act relating to campaign finance disclosure.

Brief Description: Concerning campaign finance disclosure.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/23/06, 1/30/06 [DPS, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 2/9/06, 39-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6323 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Haugen, Kline, McCaslin and Pridemore.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton and Mulliken.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: The campaign finance disclosure laws apply to all election campaigns except those for precinct committee officer, for federal elective office and for an office of a political subdivision that does not encompass a whole county and that contains fewer than 5,000 registered voters.

Another exemption to the reporting provisions applies to candidates, elected officials and agencies in political subdivisions with less than 1,000 registered voters. This exemption also includes the political committees formed to support or oppose candidates or ballot propositions and persons making independent expenditures concerning those ballot propositions in political subdivisions with less than 1000 registered voters.

These exemptions must be reversed by order of the PDC upon its receipt of a valid petition of 15 percent of the registered voters or upon the commission's finding that the governing body of the political subdivision submitted a valid petition to the commission.

The PDC cannot consider petitions from the political subdivision to void the exemption from reporting unless the petition is filed with the commission at least 60 days before the election at which a ballot measure is considered or at least 60 days before the first day of the filing period for candidates running in the election for which disclosure is to be required.

Summary of Bill: Both 60-day restrictions are removed on the filing by political subdivisions of petitions with the PDC to void the exemption from having to report contributions.

Campaigns for an office of a political subdivision that does not encompass a whole county and that contains fewer than five thousand registered voters are included in campaign contribution reporting requirements along with all other city and town mayoral and council campaigns that receive or expect to receive \$3,500 or more in contributions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received on January 23, 2006.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Large contributions are coming to some of the smaller jurisdictions. It is important to know who supports elected officials who spend voters' tax dollars. It is a matter not so much of the size of the jurisdiction, but of the amounts of money contributed. It should be narrowed to city and town mayors and council members.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other: A lot of smaller jurisdictions have trouble attracting candidates. We would not want to make it more difficult to attract candidates.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Regala, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Victoria Lincoln, Association of Washington Cities.

House Amendment(s): The House amendment makes three changes:

- 1) Campaign finance disclosure applies to "any political subdivision," instead of just city and town mayor and council races as in the Senate version.
- 2) The threshold amount of contributions that triggers reporting is \$5,000. The Senate version is \$3,500.
- 3) Once \$5,000 in contributions is received, the campaign of any political subdivision must comply with all provisions of campaign finance disclosure. The Senate version also requires compliance with the personal financial affairs reporting provisions, once the \$3,500 threshold is reached.