HB 1144-S - DIGEST

(AS OF HOUSE 2ND READING 3/08/05)

Finds that: (1) Timely disclosure to voters of the identity and sources of funding for electioneering communications is vitally important to the integrity of state, local, and judicial elections.

(2) Electioneering communications that identify political candidates for state, local, or judicial office and that are distributed sixty days before an election for those offices are intended to influence voters and the outcome of those elections.

(3) The state has a compelling interest in providing voters information about electioneering communications in political campaigns concerning candidates for state, local, or judicial office so that voters can be fully informed as to the: (a) Source of support or opposition to those candidates; and (b) identity of persons attempting to influence the outcome of state, local, and judicial candidate elections.

(4) Nondisclosure of financial information about advertising that masquerades as relating only to issues and not to candidate campaigns fosters corruption or the appearance of corruption. These consequences can be substantially avoided by full disclosure of the identity and funding of those persons paying for such advertising.

(5) The United States supreme court held in *McConnell et al. v. Federal Elections Commission*, 540 U.S. 93, 124 S.Ct. 619, 157 L.Ed.2d 491 (2003) that speakers seeking to influence elections do not possess an inviolable free speech right to engage in electioneering communications regarding elections, including when issue advocacy is the functional equivalent of express advocacy. Therefore, such election campaign communications can be regulated and the source of funding disclosed.

(6) The state also has a sufficiently compelling interest in preventing corruption in political campaigns to justify and restore contribution limits and restrictions on the use of soft money in RCW 42.17.640. Those interests include restoring restrictions on the use of such funds for electioneering communications, as well as the laws preventing circumvention of those limits and restrictions.

Declares that, based upon the findings, this act is narrowly tailored to accomplish the following and is intended to: (1) Improve the disclosure to voters of information concerning persons and entities seeking to influence state, local, and judicial campaigns through reasonable and effective mechanisms, including improving disclosure of the source, identity, and funding of electioneering communications concerning state, local, and judicial candidate campaigns;

(2) Regulate electioneering communications that mention state, local, and judicial candidates and that are broadcast, mailed, erected, distributed, or otherwise published right before the election so that the public knows who is paying for such communications;

(3) Reenact and amend the contribution limits in RCW 42.17.640 (6) and (14) and the restrictions on the use of soft money, including as applied to electioneering communications, as those

limits and restrictions were in effect following the passage of chapter 2, Laws of 1993 (Initiative No. 134) and before the state supreme court decision in *Washington State Republican Party v. Washington State Public Disclosure Commission*, 141 Wn.2d 245, 4 P.3d 808 (2000). The commission is authorized to fully restore the implementation of the limits and restrictions of RCW 42.17.640 (6) and (14) in light of *McConnell et al. v. Federal Elections Commission*, 540 U.S. 93, 124 S.Ct. 619, 157 L.Ed.2d 491 (2003). The United States supreme court upheld the disclosure and regulation of electioneering communications in political campaigns, including but not limited to issue advocacy that is the functional equivalent of express advocacy;

(4) Authorize the commission to adopt rules to implement this act.