

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5278

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations & Elections, February 15, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to use of public funds for political purposes.

**Brief Description:** Concerning use of public funds to finance campaigns for local office.

**Sponsors:** Senators Franklin, Kastama, Kline, Spanel, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe, Regala, Pridemore, Poulsen, Fraser, Rasmussen and Rockefeller.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/01/07, 2/15/07 [DPS, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5278 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Kline and Pridemore.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

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

**Staff:** Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

**Background:** Initiative 134, passed by the voters in 1992, regulates political contributions and campaign expenditures, and prohibits the use of public funds to finance political campaigns for state or local offices. Prior to the passage of Initiative 134, some local governments had ordinances providing the availability of public funds for political campaigns for municipal offices.

**Summary of Bill:** The prohibition on the use of public funds to finance political campaigns for local offices is eliminated.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Government Operations & Elections):** The substitute bill limits the use of public funds for campaigns to cities who wish to establish a program.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Local jurisdictions should have the discretion to publicly fund local elections if they choose to. The electoral process is so overwhelmed by a need for money that candidates spend less time meeting voters and discussing issues because of the great need to raise money and get their message out. Candidates should not owe their conscience to anyone. Candidates should not be placed in a position of promising so much to so many just to raise the necessary funds to run for office. Public funding was allowed in Seattle from 1979 - 1991. During that time more women and minorities were elected to local office. Local control equals local responsibility. Cities, towns and counties should have the choice to determine how they want to fund their local elections.

CON: The bill as drafted allows any money to be used, including tax money. Are we to increase local taxes to pay for elections? The process that is in place currently requires a grass roots effort. Local candidates need to get out into the community and meet people and ask for support. That system works at a local level and does not need to be changed.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Franklin, prime sponsor; John King and Craig Salins, Washington Public Campaigns; Susan Sanders, League of Women's Voters; Wayne Barnett, City of Seattle; Rebecca Wolfe, Greater Seattle Alliance for Democracy; Marcella Stone, Washington Public Campaigns.

CON: Rose Bowman, Washington Association of County Treasurers.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: PRO: Jacqui Brown Miller, South Puget Sound Chapter of the Alliance for Democracy.