

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2299

As Reported by House Committee On: State Government

Title: An act relating to the public disclosure commission concerning responsibilities and funding.

Brief Description: Requiring lobbying reports to be filed electronically.

Sponsors: Representatives Moeller, Stanford, S. Hunt, Orwall, Magendanz, Van De Wege, Appleton, Hudgins, Pollet and Fitzgibbon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 1/12/16, 1/14/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires lobbyists, lobbyist employers, and local agencies to file lobbying reports electronically.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Frame and Moscoso.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) was created in 1973 through the enactment of Citizens' Initiative 276. The PDC provides public access to campaign finance information, lobbying expenditures, and financial affairs of public officials and candidates. The PDC also enforces compliance with state campaign finance and disclosure laws. Lobbying reports are available to the public on the PDC website.

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.

Lobbyists and lobbyist employers are required to register with the PDC. Lobbyists must report lobbying activity and expenditures monthly, and lobbyist employers must report expenditures annually. Electronic filing is available to lobbyists and employers but is not required.

State and local agencies may use public funds for lobbying activities only to provide information or advocate official agency interests and positions. All public agencies are required to report lobbying activity quarterly. Electronic filing is mandatory for state agencies. Electronic filing is encouraged for local agencies but is not required.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Local agencies must file lobbying reports electronically as of the effective date of the act. By January 1, 2018, individual lobbyists and lobbyist employers must file lobbying reports electronically. The PDC must design, develop, implement, and maintain computer hardware and software or other applications compatible with its current operating systems to accommodate electronic filings. The system must result in readily available data to the public for review and analysis. If a filer attempts to file within the required timeframe but is unsuccessful due to a technological failure, the PDC must provide the filer with an alternative means of filing.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires the PDC to provide an alternative means of filing when a filer declares an attempt at filing within the deadline which failed due to technological failure.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Electronic filing has been optional since 2002, however it is difficult to find lobbying reports in the current system. A new electronic filing system will increase transparency. The PDC is in the process of developing the new application and expect it to be complete by the second quarter of 2016. Once the system is complete, all reports can be filed electronically and be immediately available to the public. It is important for lobbyist information to be transparent to the public and that the public has confidence in that transparency.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Would like to see an amendment to make an exception to the electronic filing requirement when someone tries to file but is not successful. Not all technology is compatible with PDC systems.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Moeller, prime sponsor; Evelyn Lopez, Public Disclosure Commission; and Steve Gano.

(Other) Bob Cooper.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.