

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5867

As of February 25, 2015

Title: An act relating to enhancing public disclosure of lobbying and campaign activity.

Brief Description: Enhancing public disclosure of lobbying and campaign activity.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Miloscia, Billig, McCoy, McAuliffe and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/17/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) was created and empowered by an initiative of the people to provide timely and meaningful public access to information about the financing of political campaigns, lobbyist expenditures, and the financial affairs of public officials and candidates, and to ensure compliance with contribution limits and other campaign finance restrictions.

In 1999 electronic filing was made available to candidates, public officials, and political committees for filing financial affairs reports, contribution reports, and expenditure reports. By 2002 electronic filing was mandatory. Electronic filing was made available to lobbyists and lobbyist employers for submitting their reports in 2002, although it is not mandatory. Electronic filing includes, but is not limited to, filing by diskette, modem, satellite, or over the Internet. Funding was made available to the PDC in the fiscal year 2008 budget for a feasibility study to determine the cost to design, develop, implement, and maintain an application to accommodate electronic filing by lobbyists, lobbyist employers, and public agencies, as well as a database and query system compatible with current computer architecture, technology, and operating systems.

Summary of Bill: Agencies required to report lobbying expenditures must file all required reports to the PDC electronically over the Internet. Beginning January 1, 2017, all lobbyists and lobbyists' employers required to report lobbying activities must file the required reports electronically over the Internet.

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.

An annual fee not to exceed \$100 must be paid to the PDC for data development costs and purchase and maintenance of computer hardware and software to maintain electronic filing of reports required by the PDC by the following entities:

- political committees and candidates required to file contribution and expenditure reports;
- every lobbyist who has a total reportable accrued compensation of \$10,000 or more from the previous calendar year;
- every lobbyist employer who has a total reportable accrued expenses and payments for lobbying of \$10,000 or more from the previous calendar year; and
- government entities that employ more than 50 full-time equivalent employees.

No person or individual must pay more than one fee in a calendar year, and may appeal the imposition of multiple fees in a calendar year. The PDC must adopt procedures for waiver of all or part of the annual fee, based on the size, frequency, and complexity of lobbying or campaign activity.

The Public Disclosure Electronic Filing Account (Account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. Receipts collected under the act must be deposited into the Account and may be used only for costs incurred as a result of the design, development, implementation, and maintenance of computer hardware and software to accommodate electronic filing and a database and query system compatible with current systems that result in readily available data to the public for review and analysis. Only the executive director of the PDC, or the executive director's designee, may authorize expenditures from the Account. The Account is subject to allotment procedures, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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