
HOUSE BILL 2106

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Representatives Koster, Hudgins, Taylor, and Shea

Read first time 02/15/17. Referred to Committee on State Govt,
Elections & IT.

1 AN ACT Relating to election year restrictions on state
2 legislators; amending RCW 42.52.180 and 42.52.185; and creating a new
3 section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the prohibition
6 on the use of public resources for campaign purposes serves an
7 important purpose, but that the period prohibiting state legislators
8 from communicating with constituents at public expense is unnecessary
9 once the election, and the campaign itself, has ended. Furthermore,
10 the delay in constituent outreach after the election only hinders a
11 legislator's ability to quickly and effectively respond to requests
12 and keep the public informed about current state issues, and the
13 various deadlines relating to mailed, emailed, and web site
14 communications are confusing and need to be harmonized. For these
15 reasons, the legislature intends to change mailed, emailed, and web
16 site communication deadlines to the same time periods, in order to
17 allow legislators to actively engage with the public on official
18 legislative business in a timely and effective manner.

19 **Sec. 2.** RCW 42.52.180 and 2011 c 60 s 30 are each amended to
20 read as follows:

1 (1) No state officer or state employee may use or authorize the
2 use of facilities of an agency, directly or indirectly, for the
3 purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office
4 or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition.
5 Knowing acquiescence by a person with authority to direct, control,
6 or influence the actions of the state officer or state employee using
7 public resources in violation of this section constitutes a violation
8 of this section. Facilities of an agency include, but are not limited
9 to, use of stationery, postage, machines, and equipment, use of state
10 employees of the agency during working hours, vehicles, office space,
11 publications of the agency, and clientele lists of persons served by
12 the agency.

13 (2) This section shall not apply to the following activities:

14 (a) Action taken at an open public meeting by members of an
15 elected legislative body to express a collective decision, or to
16 actually vote upon a motion, proposal, resolution, order, or
17 ordinance, or to support or oppose a ballot proposition as long as
18 (i) required notice of the meeting includes the title and number of
19 the ballot proposition, and (ii) members of the legislative body or
20 members of the public are afforded an approximately equal opportunity
21 for the expression of an opposing view;

22 (b) A statement by an elected official in support of or in
23 opposition to any ballot proposition at an open press conference or
24 in response to a specific inquiry. For the purposes of this
25 subsection, it is not a violation of this section for an elected
26 official to respond to an inquiry regarding a ballot proposition, to
27 make incidental remarks concerning a ballot proposition in an
28 official communication, or otherwise comment on a ballot proposition
29 without an actual, measurable expenditure of public funds. The ethics
30 boards shall adopt by rule a definition of measurable expenditure;

31 (c) The maintenance of official legislative web sites throughout
32 the year, regardless of pending elections. The web sites may contain
33 any discretionary material which was also specifically prepared for
34 the legislator in the course of his or her duties as a legislator,
35 including newsletters and press releases. The official legislative
36 web sites of legislators seeking reelection or election to any office
37 shall not be altered ((between June 30th and November 15th)), other
38 than during a special legislative session, beginning on the first day
39 of the declaration of candidacy filing period specified in RCW

1 29A.24.050 through the date of the general election of the election
2 year. The web site shall not be used for campaign purposes;

3 (d) Activities that are part of the normal and regular conduct of
4 the office or agency; and

5 (e) De minimis use of public facilities by statewide elected
6 officials and legislators incidental to the preparation or delivery
7 of permissible communications, including written and verbal
8 communications initiated by them of their views on ballot
9 propositions that foreseeably may affect a matter that falls within
10 their constitutional or statutory responsibilities.

11 (3) As to state officers and employees, this section operates to
12 the exclusion of RCW 42.17A.555.

13 **Sec. 3.** RCW 42.52.185 and 2011 c 60 s 31 are each amended to
14 read as follows:

15 (1) During the (~~twelve-month~~) period beginning on December 1st
16 of the year before a general election for a state legislator's
17 election to office and continuing through (~~November 30th immediately~~
18 ~~after~~) the (~~general~~) date of the election, the legislator may not
19 mail, either by regular mail or (~~electronic-mail~~) email, to a
20 constituent at public expense a letter, newsletter, brochure, or
21 other piece of literature, except for routine legislative
22 correspondence, such as scheduling, and as follows:

23 (a) The legislator may mail two mailings of newsletters to
24 constituents. All newsletters within each mailing of newsletters must
25 be identical as to their content but not as to the constituent name
26 or address. (~~One such mailing may be mailed no later than thirty~~
27 ~~days after the start of a regular legislative session, except that a~~
28 ~~legislator appointed during a regular legislative session to fill a~~
29 ~~vacant seat may have up to thirty days from the date of appointment~~
30 ~~to send out the first mailing. The other~~) Both mailings (~~may~~) must
31 be mailed (~~no later than sixty days after the end of a regular~~
32 ~~legislative session~~) before the first day of the declaration of
33 candidacy filing period specified in RCW 29A.24.050.

34 (b) The legislator may mail an individual letter to (i) an
35 individual constituent who has contacted the legislator regarding the
36 subject matter of the letter during the legislator's current term of
37 office; (ii) an individual constituent who holds a governmental
38 office with jurisdiction over the subject matter of the letter; or
39 (iii) an individual constituent who has received an award or honor of

1 extraordinary distinction of a type that is sufficiently infrequent
2 to be noteworthy to a reasonable person, including, but not limited
3 to: (A) An international or national award such as the Nobel prize or
4 the Pulitzer prize; (B) a state award such as Washington scholar; (C)
5 an Eagle Scout award; and (D) a Medal of Honor.

6 (c) In those cases where constituents have specifically indicated
7 that they would like to be contacted to receive regular or periodic
8 updates on legislative matters or been added to a distribution list
9 and provided regular opportunities to unsubscribe from that mailing
10 list, legislators may provide such updates by ~~((electronic mail))~~
11 email throughout the legislative session and up until ~~((thirty days~~
12 ~~from the conclusion of a legislative session))~~ the first day of the
13 declaration of candidacy filing period specified in RCW 29A.24.050.
14 Legislators may also provide these updates by email during any
15 special legislative session.

16 ~~((For purposes of subsection (1) of this section,~~
17 ~~"legislator" means a legislator who is a "candidate," as defined by~~
18 ~~RCW 42.17A.005, for any public office.~~

19 ~~(3))~~ A violation of this section constitutes use of the
20 facilities of a public office for the purpose of assisting a campaign
21 under RCW 42.52.180.

22 ~~((4))~~ (3) The house of representatives and senate shall
23 specifically limit expenditures per member for the total cost of
24 mailings. Those costs include, but are not limited to, production
25 costs, printing costs, and postage costs. The limits imposed under
26 this subsection apply only to the total expenditures on mailings per
27 member and not to any categorical cost within the total.

28 ~~((5))~~ (4) For purposes of this section~~((7))~~:

29 (a) "Legislator" means a legislator who is a "candidate," as
30 defined in RCW 42.17A.005, for any public office; and

31 (b) Persons residing outside the legislative district represented
32 by the legislator are not considered to be constituents, but
33 students, military personnel, or others temporarily employed outside
34 of the district who normally reside in the district are considered to
35 be constituents.

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