

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1375

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Relations

Title: An act relating to applying campaign contribution limits to candidates for all port districts.

Brief Description: Applying campaign contribution limits to candidates for all port districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Wylie, Stonier, Vick, Harris, Gregerson, Kraft, Appleton, Dolan, Pellicciotti, Doglio and Fey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 1/30/19, 2/8/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Applies campaign contribution limits that are applicable to port districts with over 200,000 registered voters to all port district offices regardless of the number of registered voters.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Gregerson, Chair; Pellicciotti, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Dolan, Hudgins, Mosbrucker and Smith.

Staff: Desiree Omlı (786-7105).

Background:

The Fair Campaign Practices Act was enacted following passage of Initiative 134 (I-134) in 1992. The initiative limited campaign contributions, further regulated independent expenditures, restricted the use of public funds for political purposes, and required public officials to report gifts received in excess of \$50.

Campaign contribution limits apply to candidates for: state office, legislative office, and certain local elected offices including county office, mayoral office, city council, school

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board office, judicial office, certain public hospital district boards of commissioners, and special purpose district offices if the district is authorized to provide freight and passenger transfer and terminal facilities, and the district has over 200,000 registered voters. A special purpose district that is authorized to provide freight and passenger transfer and terminal facilities includes port districts.

There are two port districts that have over 200,000 registered voters: the Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma. For year 2019, state parties and caucus political parties may contribute an aggregate of up to \$1.00 per registered voter to any one candidate for a port district. County central committees and legislative district committees combined may not contribute to any one candidate an amount more than \$0.50 per registered voter. Contribution by an individual, a union or business, or a political action committee are limited to an aggregate of \$2,000 per election to a candidate for a port district.

These limits are adjusted for inflation by the Public Disclosure Commission at the beginning of each even-numbered calendar year.

Summary of Bill:

Campaign contribution limits apply to all port district offices regardless of the number of registered voters.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are 75 port districts across the state. About 20 years ago, campaign limits were placed on the two large port districts. Current law allows unlimited expenditures in smaller port districts. Port district commissioners make financial decisions and contract-related decisions involving the same people who contribute enormous amounts of money to their campaign. Generally port district races are down ticket races, but sometimes there are issues that galvanize the community. For example, there was recently over \$1 million spent in a Vancouver port district race by one industry. There was an oil terminal proposal that would have made Vancouver the largest oil terminal on the west coast; part of the proposal was to have the oil terminals 100 feet away from the landmark condominium projects that the city spent 30 years planning. The ports are in support of this bill. This bill would make smaller ports comply with the same rules as the larger ports. It is important to pass this bill this year and have the limits in place because it is a port district election year, and at least one commissioner from every port district will be on the ballot.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Wylie, prime sponsor; and Eric Johnson, Washington Public Ports Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.