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HOUSE BILL 1180

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State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Representatives Tarleton, Jinkins, Slatter, Ryu, and Goodman

Read first time 01/16/19. Referred to Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations.

1 AN ACT Relating to television airtime for candidates for local  
2 office; adding a new section to chapter 42.17A RCW; and creating a  
3 new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that it is paramount  
6 for our state that diverse members of our community choose public  
7 service and believe that pursuit of public office is within their  
8 reach. Further, it is critical that candidates are able to reach the  
9 voters with their messages so that voters may make informed  
10 decisions. However, increasingly, the cost of television time is a  
11 barrier to candidates and may deter diverse populations from deciding  
12 to pursue public office. Therefore, the legislature intends to  
13 require commercial and cable broadcasting stations to provide,  
14 without charge to the candidates, access to television airtime to  
15 local candidates for office.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 42.17A  
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1)(a) A broadcaster must provide to each local candidate in each  
19 community in which it has a licensing broadcasting station, upon  
20 request of the candidate, two segments of airtime without charge for

1 each primary and general election at which the candidate appears on  
2 the ballot. Each segment of airtime must:

3 (i) Be at least two minutes in length;

4 (ii) Air during the morning or afternoon commute hours or during  
5 a news show between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.;

6 (iii) Air within thirty days before the primary and general  
7 election, as appropriate; and

8 (iv) Be separated by the candidate's other segment by at least  
9 ten days.

10 (b) A broadcaster must post the airtime segments online within  
11 forty-eight hours of the broadcast and maintain the segments online  
12 until the election.

13 (c) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the  
14 broadcaster may select the time and format of the broadcast.

15 (2) Airtime provided under this section is not a contribution for  
16 purposes of this chapter.

17 (3) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this  
18 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

19 (a) "Broadcaster" means a for-profit entity that distributes or  
20 transmits electronic signals to the public at large using television  
21 or cable television technology.

22 (b) "Local candidate" means a candidate for an office other than  
23 a state or federal office:

24 (i) In a jurisdiction with at least five thousand registered  
25 voters; and

26 (ii) Who has reported to the public disclosure commission or can  
27 otherwise demonstrate raising campaign contributions from at least  
28 the following number of discrete donors in the jurisdiction:

29 (A) Fifty donors in a jurisdiction with twenty-five thousand or  
30 fewer residents;

31 (B) One hundred donors in a jurisdiction with more than twenty-  
32 five thousand but no more than one hundred thousand residents; and

33 (C) Two hundred donors in a jurisdiction with more than one  
34 hundred thousand residents.

35 (4) The legislature finds that the practices covered by this  
36 section are matters vitally affecting the public interest for the  
37 purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW. A  
38 violation of this section is not reasonable in relation to the  
39 development and preservation of business and is an unfair or  
40 deceptive act in trade or commerce and an unfair method of

1 competition for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act,  
2 chapter 19.86 RCW.

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