

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6344

As Passed House - Amended:

February 28, 2010

Title: An act relating to campaign contribution limits.

Brief Description: Concerning campaign contribution limits.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Fairley, Prentice, Hargrove, Kauffman, Marr and McDermott).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 2/23/10 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/10, 90-6.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Extends campaign contribution limits to all county offices, city council office, and mayoral office.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Flannigan, Hurst, Miloscia and Taylor.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The Fair Campaign Practices Act was enacted following passage of Initiative 134 (I-134) in 1992. The initiative imposed campaign contribution limits, 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. The contribution limits imposed by I-134

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apply only to elections for statewide office and elections for state legislative office.

In 2006 contribution limits were imposed on county offices in counties with over 200,000 registered voters (Clark, King, Pierce, Spokane, and Snohomish counties); port district offices in counties with over 200,000 registered voters (ports of Seattle and Tacoma); and to the Washington Supreme Court, superior courts, and Appeals Court judges.

Contribution limits established for an individual, a union or business, or a political action committee are an aggregate of \$800 per election to a candidate for state legislative office and county office, an aggregate of \$1,600 per election to a candidate for statewide office, port office, and judicial office.

Limits are also imposed on political parties. State party central committees, minor party committees, and legislative caucus committees may contribute an aggregate of up to \$0.80 per registered voter in the candidate's district for an election cycle. County central committees and legislative district committees may contribute an aggregate of up to \$0.40 per registered voter in the candidate's district. County central committees and legislative district committees combined may not contribute to any one candidate an amount more than \$0.40 times the number of registered voters statewide.

These limits are adjusted for inflation by the Public Disclosure Commission every two years.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Campaign contribution limits are extended to candidates for county office in all counties, city council office, and mayoral office. No person may make a contribution to candidates for these offices that, in the aggregate, exceeds \$800 per election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended 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) Washington Public Campaigns supports the bill. Since the 1990s, limits have been imposed on state offices, and later extended to offices in some counties and ports, and judicial offices. However, campaigns for most local offices have not been subject to limits and have resulted in contributions to specific local candidate campaigns that have been many times higher than what is allowed for candidates for state offices. The absence of limits presents the potential for undue influence and creates an appearance of conflict of interest that tends to diminish public confidence.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: John King, Washington Public Campaigns.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.