

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5507

As Amended by House, April 9, 2013

Title: An act relating to increasing transparency of donors to candidates and ballot measures.

Brief Description: Increasing transparency of donors to candidates and ballot measures.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Governmental Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Billig, Benton, Rolfes, Rivers, Hatfield, Harper, Ranker, Hasegawa, Frockt, Schlicher, Smith, Fraser, Sheldon, Roach, Kohl-Welles, Keiser, Shin, Murray, McAuliffe, Kline and Conway).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/11/13, 2/18/13 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/27/13, 49-0.

Passed House: 4/09/13, 93-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5507 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Braun, Conway, Fraser and Rivers.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Secretary of State must print and distribute a voters' pamphlet to each household in the state, public libraries, and other locations whenever a statewide ballot measure or office is scheduled to appear on the general election ballot. The voters' pamphlet must contain the following information:

- information about ballot measures and advisory vote measures;
- candidate statements, if submitted;
- contact information for the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC);
- contact information for the major political parties;
- a statement explaining the amendatory style used in ballot measures; and
- any additional information required by law or that the Secretary of State deems informative to voters.

The top of each ballot must contain clear and concise instructions directing the voter on how to mark their ballot, including how to write in a vote. Ballots must contain a clear

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delineation between the instructions and the candidates and measures that appear on the ballot.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The statement: "For a list of the people and organizations that donated to state and local government candidates and ballot measure campaigns, visit www.pdc.wa.gov," must be included in the ballot instructions and in the voters' pamphlet. The Secretary of State may substitute such language as is necessary for accuracy and clarity. If placement of the statement would lengthen the ballot to the point that additional postage will be incurred, the statement may be printed in a prominent place on the ballot envelope or in the ballot materials.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Our state has a wonderful public disclosure system, but there is a gap. Many voters do not know where to find this information or that the information exists. This bill will put a link to this treasure trove of information. This is a simple bill and will help with transparency and voter confidence.

OTHER: The Secretary of State supports the intent of the bill, but recommends paraphrasing the language rather than quoting it. What if the PDC changes its website? Sometimes phrasing isn't the most intuitive for readers. The PDC is supportive of anything getting the word out about its mission. Anything that encourages more dissemination of information is consistent with the PDC's mission and goals. Not everybody knows about the PDC's website. Auditors are concerned about adding additional information to the ballot itself. The ballot is very crowded. Folks do not naturally read the ballot and the ballot instructions. We would be open to placing the information some place other than the ballot itself.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Billig, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Katie Blinn, Office of the Secretary of State; Andrea McNamara Doyle, PDC; Walt Washington, WA Assn. of County Auditors.

House Amendment(s): The requirement that the statement be printed along with information for each statewide issue in the voters' pamphlet is removed. The statement must only be included in a prominent position in the voters' pamphlet, such as on the cover or on the first two pages.

Permits the county auditor or local election official, in their discretion, to print the statement in a prominent position on the ballot envelope and in the materials that accompany the ballot, rather than on the ballot itself.