

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5748

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As Amended by House, April 17, 2013

**Title:** An act relating to extending contribution limits to candidates for public hospital district boards of commissioners.

**Brief Description:** Extending contribution limits to candidates for public hospital district boards of commissioners.

**Sponsors:** Senator Roach.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Governmental Operations: 2/18/13 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/07/13, 49-0.

Passed House: 4/17/13, 82-15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

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

**Staff:** Sam Thompson (786-7413)

**Background:** State law imposes limits on campaign contributions to candidates for certain public offices. The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) may adjust these contribution limits based on an inflationary index. Currently, individuals, unions, businesses, and political action committees are limited to contributing an aggregate of:

- \$900 per election to a candidate for the Legislature, county office, city council office, mayoral office, or school board office; and
- \$1,800 per election to a candidate for statewide elective office and port district offices in districts with more than 200,000 registered voters, currently the Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma.

Campaign contribution limits also apply to political parties, including the following:

- state party organizations and legislative caucus political committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of \$0.90 per registered voter in the jurisdiction from which the candidate is elected; and

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- county central committees and legislative district committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of \$0.45 per registered voter in the jurisdiction from which the candidate is elected.

Public hospital districts are local government entities that may be created to provide health care facilities and services. Since 1945, when they were authorized in state law, more than 50 public hospital districts have been created. Public hospital districts are governed by three, five, or seven-member boards of commissioners. Commissioners are elected to six-year terms.

**Summary of Bill:** Public hospital district boards of commissioners are added to the list of public offices subject to campaign contribution limits. Accordingly, individuals, unions, businesses, and political action committees are limited to contributing an aggregate of \$900 per election to a candidate. State party organizations and caucus political committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of \$0.90 per registered voter in the public hospital district. County central committees and legislative district committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of \$0.45 per registered voter in the public hospital district.

**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:** PRO: The combined total of contributions to candidates in one recent race in King County Public Hospital District #1 was over \$200,000. This bill is necessary to bring needed reforms in the district, which has paid district officials very large salaries. Races in hospital districts have involved large amounts of money.

OTHER: Campaign contributions to candidates in King County Public Hospital District #1 races have been very large.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Paul Joos, Anthony Hemstad, Martin Durkan, King County Public Hospital District #1.

OTHER: Jeff Mero, Assn. of WA Hospital Districts.

**House Amendment(s):** Contribution limits apply only to candidates for public hospital district commissioner in districts with populations over 150,000. Currently, three public hospital districts have populations over 150,000, two in King County and one in Snohomish County.