
State Government & Tribal Relations Committee

HB 1180

Brief Description: Concerning television airtime for candidates for local office.

Sponsors: Representatives Tarleton, Jinkins, Slatter, Ryu and Goodman.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires television broadcasters to provide two two-minute segments of airtime free-of-charge to certain candidates for local office in the month before an election.
- Provides that a broadcaster's failure to do so is a violation of the Consumer Protection Act.

Hearing Date: 1/30/19

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

The Fair Campaign Practices Act regulates a number of aspects of campaigning for public office in Washington. In particular, the state has enacted various policies related to electioneering communications—broadcasts within 60 days of an election that clearly identify a candidate for office.

Summary of Bill:

Upon request of a candidate for local office, a for-profit television broadcaster must provide the candidate with two segments of airtime free-of-charge for each primary and general election at which the candidate appears on the ballot. To be eligible for the free airtime, a candidate must be running for a local office in a jurisdiction with at least 5,000 registered voters, and the candidate must have received campaign contributions from at least:

- 50 donors in a jurisdiction with 25,000 or fewer residents;

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- 100 donors in a jurisdiction with 25,001–100,000 residents; or
- 200 donors in a jurisdiction with 100,000 or more residents.

The two segments must each be at least two minutes long. They must air during the morning or afternoon commute hours, or during a news show between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. The segments must air within 30 days before the primary and general election, and they must be separated from one another by at least 10 days. The broadcaster must post the segments online within two days after the broadcast and keep them available until the election.

Violations of this requirement are considered violations of the Consumer Protection Act and are enforceable under its provisions. Violations of this requirement are also enforceable by the Public Disclosure Commission through its complaint adjudication process. The airtime provided is not considered a contribution for purposes of the state's regulations on campaign contributions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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