

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6775

As Passed Senate, February 14, 2000

Title: An act relating to filing of reports with the public disclosure commission.

Brief Description: Simplifying public disclosure report filing and distributions.

Sponsors: Senators Patterson, Horn, Haugen, Shin, Prentice, Goings, Gardner and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State & Local Government: 2/2/2000, 2/3/2000 [DP].

Passed Senate, 2/14/2000, 42-6.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chair; Hale, Haugen, Horn and Kline.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) was created and empowered by initiative of the people in 1972 to provide timely and meaningful public access to information about the financing of political campaigns, lobbyist expenditures, and the financial affairs of public officials and candidates, and to ensure compliance with contribution limits and other campaign finance restrictions. It applies to political activities at the federal, state, county, city, town, school district, port district, special district, or other state political subdivision levels.

Continuing political committees must file monthly with the commission and the county auditor or elections officer a report of total contributions received or total expenditures made exceeding \$200.

Candidates and political committees must file certain reports with the commission and the county auditor or elections officer at regular intervals specified by statute.

By January 1, 2001, the commission must have an electronic filing alternative available to lobbyists and lobbyists' employers.

Beginning January 1, 2001, a continuing political committee that expended \$10,000 or more in the preceding or current year must file its reports electronically.

In 1999, the law required that the commission establish goals for public access to its records. The goal for reports filed electronically is accessibility at the commission's office within two business days of receipt and accessibility on the commission's web site within seven business days of receipt. For reports submitted other than electronically, the goal is accessibility at

the commission's office within four business days of receipt and accessibility on the commission's web site within 14 business days of receipt.

On or about January 1, 2001, the accessibility goals must be revised to shorter intervals between receipt and availability. Reports submitted electronically must be accessible in the commission's office and on its web site within two business days of receipt. Reports submitted other than electronically must be accessible at the commission's office and on its web site within four business days of receipt.

Summary of Bill: After January 1, 2001, no filing with the county auditor or elections officer is required if the committee filed with the commission electronically.

If a city requires that candidates or committees for city offices file reports with a city agency, no report with the county auditor or elections officer is required.

The commission must make the electronic filing alternative available to lobbyists and lobbyists' employers by January 1, 2002.

Beginning January 1, 2002, a candidate or political committee that expended \$25,000 or more in the preceding or current year must file its reports electronically. Beginning January 1, 2004, the electronic filing threshold drops to \$10,000.

The January 1, 2001 accessibility goal is modified to require electronic filings to be accessible in the commission's office within two business days of receipt and on the web site within four business days of receipt. Reports submitted other than electronically must be accessible in the commission's office within four business days of receipt and on the web site within seven business days of receipt.

The revision of accessibility goals is additionally required on or about January 1, 2002. These goals must require electronic filings to be accessible in the commission's office and on its web site within two business days of receipt. Reports submitted other than electronically must be accessible in the commission's office and on its web site within four business days of receipt.

The commission is required to offer political committees and residents of the state both a regular and a toll-free telephone number by which to make contact.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill recognizes that the criteria from last session are better delayed so the PDC can deliver better, well-considered service.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Cherie Davidson, League of Women Voters WA (pro); Vicki Rippie, PDC (pro).

House Amendment(s): The ethics code is amended to permit the use of internet links by state officers or employees to web sites operated by the state. This activity is defined as not constituting the use of public facilities to assist a campaign.

The PDC is permitted to make case-by-case exceptions for candidates who do not communicate electronically.

The open books of account requirement is clarified for the case where the eighth day before an election falls on a legal holiday. In that case, books must be open for two consecutive hours between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm on the seventh day. Inspection requirements for books of account for continuing political committees are made the same as those for a candidate.