

RCW 42.17A.350 Top five contributors to political advertisement.

(1) For any requirement to include the top five contributors under RCW 42.17A.320 or any other provision of this chapter, the sponsor must identify the five persons or entities making the largest contributions to the sponsor in excess of the threshold aggregate value to be considered an independent expenditure in an election for public office under *RCW 42.17A.005(29) (a) (iv) reportable under this chapter during the twelve-month period preceding the date on which the advertisement is initially to be published or otherwise presented to the public.

(2) If one or more of the top five contributors identified under subsection (1) of this section is a political committee, the top three contributors to each of those political committees during the same period must then be identified, and so on, until the individuals or entities other than political committees with the largest aggregate contributions to each political committee identified under subsection (1) of this section have also been identified. The sponsor must identify the three individuals or entities, not including political committees, who made the largest aggregate contributions to any political committee identified under subsection (1) of this section in excess of the threshold aggregate value to be considered an independent expenditure in an election for public office under *RCW 42.17A.005(29) (a) (iv) reportable under this chapter during the same period, and the names of those individuals or entities must be displayed in the advertisement alongside the statement "Top Three Donors to PAC Contributors."

(3) Contributions to the sponsor or a political committee that are earmarked, tracked, and used for purposes other than the advertisement in question should not be counted in identifying the top five contributors under subsection (1) of this section or the top three contributors under subsection (2) of this section.

(4) The sponsor shall not be liable for a violation of this section that occurs because a contribution to any political committee identified under subsection (1) of this section has not been reported to the commission.

(5) The commission is authorized to adopt rules, as needed, to prevent ways to circumvent the purposes of the required disclosures in this section to inform voters about the individuals and entities sponsoring political advertisements. [2019 c 261 § 2.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 42.17A.005 was amended by 2020 c 152 § 2, changing subsection (29) to subsection (30).

Findings—Intent—2019 c 261: "The legislature finds that the public has the right to know who is contributing to election campaigns in Washington state and that campaign finance disclosure deters corruption, increases public confidence in Washington state elections, raises the level of debate, and strengthens our representative democracy.

The legislature finds that campaign finance disclosure is overwhelmingly supported by the citizens of Washington state as evidenced by the two initiatives that largely established Washington's current system. Both passed with more than seventy-two percent of the popular vote, as well as winning margins in every county in the state.

One of the cornerstones of Washington state's campaign finance disclosure laws is the requirement that political advertisements disclose the sponsor and the sponsor's top five donors. Many political action committees have avoided this important transparency requirement

by funneling money from political action committee to political action committee so the top five donors listed are deceptive political action committee names rather than the real donors. The legislature finds that this practice, sometimes called "gray money" or "donor washing," undermines the intent of Washington state's campaign finance laws and impairs the transparency required for fair elections and a healthy democracy.

Therefore, the legislature intends to close this disclosure loophole, increase transparency and accountability, raise the level of discourse, deter corruption, and strengthen confidence in the election process by prohibiting political committees from receiving an overwhelming majority of their funds from one or a combination of political committees." [2019 c 261 § 1.]