

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## EHB 1551

---

**As Passed House:**

January 25, 2008

**Title:** An act relating to public funding of campaigns for local offices.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the public funding of political campaigns for certain offices.

**Sponsors:** By Representatives McDermott, Miloscia, McIntire, Fromhold, Dunshee, Cody, Green, Ormsby, Appleton, Hunt, Chase, Schual-Berke, Sells, Roberts, Hasegawa, Kagi, Moeller, Pedersen and Rolfes.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 2/7/07, 2/20/07 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 1/25/08, 56-38.

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill**

- Removes the prohibition on using public funds to finance political campaigns for local office.

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Green, McDermott, Miloscia and Ormsby.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member and Kretz.

**Staff:** Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

**Background:**

The Fair Campaign Practices Act, enacted as part of Initiative 134 in 1992, imposes campaign contribution limits on elections for state office. It also prohibits the use of public funds to

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

finance political campaigns for state or local office. The Public Disclosure Commission is responsible for enforcing campaign finance laws.

---

**Summary of Engrossed Bill:**

The prohibition against the use of public funds to finance political campaigns for local office is removed. Before a local government may adopt public funding, it must be submitted to the voters for approval or rejection. If a county, city, town, or district establishes a program to publicly finance local political campaigns, only funds derived from local sources may be used to fund the program.

---

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill restores the local option for local jurisdictions to publicly finance campaigns. The initiative that got rid of this option was not meant to do this. Public funding works well in other places. Local jurisdictions should be able to design their own programs and allow candidates to spend more time on issues and less time on raising money. Public financing would allow non-partisanship of local offices to stand because candidates will not have to beg at the door of the political parties.

This bill is about local control, not public financing. Local officials can and should be able to decide this issue. The entrance fee for a campaign in Seattle is currently quite high. People there at least want the chance to discuss whether public financing is the solution.

(Opposed) With diminishing funds available to local jurisdictions, tax dollars are better spent delivering services to citizens. Locally elected officials are the ones assessing the taxes and collecting the fees. They feel uncomfortable turning around and using that money to fund their campaigns.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative McDermott, prime sponsor; Chad Shue, Democracy for Snohomish County; Wayne Barnett, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission; Barbara Seitle, League of Women Voters of Washington; Ron Richardson; Marcee Stone, Washington Public Campaigns; and Chris Stearns, Cooper Point Association.

(Opposed) Debbie Wilke, Washington Association of County Officials;

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.