

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2047

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Affairs

Title: An act relating to reporting requirements for statewide ballot measure committees.

Brief Description: Regarding reporting requirements for statewide ballot measure committees.

Sponsors: Representative McDermott.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 2/21/07, 2/23/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires statewide ballot measure committees to file disclosure reports within 21 and seven days of the dates petitions are due.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; McDermott, Miloscia and Ormsby.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Green and Kretz.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

Campaign Disclosure

Public disclosure laws were enacted following the approval of Initiative 276 in 1972. The stated policy of Initiative 276 includes disclosure of campaign and lobbying contributions and expenditures.

The law requires that political committees file a statement of organization with the Public Disclosure Commission (Commission) within two weeks after its organization or within two weeks after the date when it first expects to receive contributions or make expenditures. The

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information required includes the names and addresses of the committee, any affiliated committees, its officers or responsible leaders, and its treasurer and depository. The statement of organization must also include information regarding the candidate the committee is supporting or opposing, or the ballot proposition the committee is supporting or opposing.

Once the statement of organization is filed with the Commission, a committee must report all contributions received and expenditures made at the following times:

- the 10th day of each month, provided that total contributions or expenditures exceed \$200 since the last report;
- the 21st day and the seventh day immediately preceding the date of the election; and
- the 10th day of the first month after the election.

Reports filed on the 10th day of the month must include contributions received and expenditures made from the closing date of the last report filed. Reports filed on the 21st day before the election must be current within five business days before the date of the report. The report filed seven days before the election must be current within one day before the date of the report.

Ballot Measure Filing Requirements

The Washington State Constitution establishes the initiative and referendum processes. Initiatives and referenda become law if approved by a majority of the votes cast in a given election. The Washington State Supreme Court has ruled that the initiative process cannot be used to amend the Constitution. The referendum process may be ordered on any law passed by the Legislature, except those necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, or for the support of state government and its existing public institutions.

The time for submitting initiative or referendum petitions to the Secretary of State is as follows:

- Referendum - not more than 90 days after adjournment of session in which the Legislature passed the act;
- Initiative to the people - not less than four months before the date of the election; and
- Initiative to the Legislature - not less than 10 days before the commencement of session.

Summary of Bill:

Statewide ballot measure committees are required to file a report of contributions and expenditures 21 days and seven days before petitions are due to the Secretary of State. The report filed 21 days before petitions are due must be current within five business days of the report and the report filed seven days before petitions are due must be current within one day of the report.

A statewide ballot measure committee is defined as a political committee that receives contributions or makes expenditures to: (a) qualify an initiative or referendum for the general

election ballot for a statewide vote; or (b) oppose the qualification of an initiative or referendum for a statewide general election vote.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2008.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The purpose of the bill is to mirror what is required of political committees in the days before an election. Last year, \$4.5 million was spent on paid signature gathering in this state and this bill provides increased accountability by requiring reporting in the days before petition signatures are due. It is within the public's interest to have information regarding large contributions coming into the state prior to the days that petition signatures are due.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative McDermott, prime sponsor; and Pat Thompson, Washington Council of County and State Employees.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.