

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1006

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

Title: An act relating to a feasibility study for electronic filing of disclosure reports.

Brief Description: Studying electronic filing of disclosure reports.

Sponsors: Representatives Moeller and B. Sullivan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 1/24/07, 1/26/07 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/12/07, 2/19/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Public Disclosure Commission to contract for a feasibility study to determine the cost of: (1) designing, developing, and implementing software to accommodate electronic filing, and (2) a database and query system.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Green, Kretz, McDermott, Miloscia and Ormsby.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

In 1972, Initiative 276 was approved by the voters of Washington. The Public Disclosure Act (PDA) requires that political campaigns, and lobbying contributions and expenditures, be fully disclosed to the public, as well as the financial affairs of elected officials and candidates.

Among other provisions, Initiative 276 required candidates and continuing political committees to file statements of organization and make periodic reports of contributions and expenditures, required public officials to file financial statements, and required persons

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lobbying the Legislature or state agencies to register and make periodic reports of their expenditures. The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) was created to receive these filings and reports and enforce these provisions.

In 1999, electronic filing was made available to candidates, public officials, and political committees for filing financial affairs reports, contribution reports, and expenditure reports. By 2002, filing electronically was mandatory. Electronic filing was made available to lobbyists and their employers for submitting their reports in 2002, although it is not mandatory.

Summary of Bill:

The PDC, in consultation with the Department of Information Services, must contract for a feasibility study to determine the cost of designing, developing, implementing, and maintaining software to accommodate electronic filing by lobbyists and lobbyist employers, and a database and query system that results in data that is readily available to the public. The study may also include other elements that promote public access to information about lobbying activity.

The study must be provided to the Legislature by January 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Washington has the best disclosure program in the nation. This bill will allow for a searchable database for lobbyists and lobbyist employers that is accessible to the public. Currently, one must go through each individual report to get lobbyist information. The Public Disclosure Commission supports the bill. In Fiscal Year 2006, one third of lobbyists and 13 percent of lobbyist employers filed electronically. The current system is incompatible with current operations and there is no searchable database. Electronic filing is used because full disclosure keeps lobbyists honest and keeps the public well informed. The current system is not usable by large lobbyists. A feasibility study is the most reliable way to get a cost estimate.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Moeller, prime sponsor; Steve Gano and Vicki Rippie, Public Disclosure Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Buri, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunn, Ericks, Fromhold, Grant, Haigh, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDermott, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

Staff: Kirk Schmidt (786-7118).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On State Government & Tribal Affairs:

The substitute bill requires any new system to be compatible with both Windows and Apple operating systems.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) has an e-filing system for legislators but there is not a system for e-filing by public agency lobbyists. A new system for public agency lobbyists will be more complicated than the current ORCA system. The current system makes it difficult to see how lobbyists are spending their money. A system for e-filing by lobbyists will improve transparency.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Vicki Rippie, Public Disclosure Commission; and Steve Gano, Gano and Associates.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.