H-0123.1

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**HOUSE BILL 1180**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Tarleton, Jinkins, Slatter, Ryu, and Goodman

AN ACT Relating to television airtime for candidates for local office; adding a new section to chapter 42.17A RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that it is paramount for our state that diverse members of our community choose public service and believe that pursuit of public office is within their reach. Further, it is critical that candidates are able to reach the voters with their messages so that voters may make informed decisions. However, increasingly, the cost of television time is a barrier to candidates and may deter diverse populations from deciding to pursue public office. Therefore, the legislature intends to require commercial and cable broadcasting stations to provide, without charge to the candidates, access to television airtime to local candidates for office.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 42.17A RCW to read as follows:

(1)(a) A broadcaster must provide to each local candidate in each community in which it has a licensing broadcasting station, upon request of the candidate, two segments of airtime without charge for each primary and general election at which the candidate appears on the ballot. Each segment of airtime must:

(i) Be at least two minutes in length;

(ii) Air during the morning or afternoon commute hours or during a news show between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.;

(iii) Air within thirty days before the primary and general election, as appropriate; and

(iv) Be separated by the candidate's other segment by at least ten days.

(b) A broadcaster must post the airtime segments online within forty-eight hours of the broadcast and maintain the segments online until the election.

(c) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the broadcaster may select the time and format of the broadcast.

(2) Airtime provided under this section is not a contribution for purposes of this chapter.

(3) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Broadcaster" means a for-profit entity that distributes or transmits electronic signals to the public at large using television or cable television technology.

(b) "Local candidate" means a candidate for an office other than a state or federal office:

(i) In a jurisdiction with at least five thousand registered voters; and

(ii) Who has reported to the public disclosure commission or can otherwise demonstrate raising campaign contributions from at least the following number of discrete donors in the jurisdiction:

(A) Fifty donors in a jurisdiction with twenty-five thousand or fewer residents;

(B) One hundred donors in a jurisdiction with more than twenty-five thousand but no more than one hundred thousand residents; and

(C) Two hundred donors in a jurisdiction with more than one hundred thousand residents.

(4) The legislature finds that the practices covered by this section are matters vitally affecting the public interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW. A violation of this section is not reasonable in relation to the development and preservation of business and is an unfair or deceptive act in trade or commerce and an unfair method of competition for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW.

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