

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5857

As Passed House - Amended:

February 27, 2024

Title: An act relating to reorganizing statutes on campaign disclosure and contribution.

Brief Description: Reorganizing statutes on campaign disclosure and contribution.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Hunt and Nobles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 2/16/24, 2/21/24 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/27/24, 95-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Recodifies campaign finance and disclosure statutes into a new title under the Revised Code of Washington.
- Makes technical changes to correct internal references.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Ramos, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Cheney, Ranking Minority Member; Christian, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Low and Mena.

Staff: Desiree Omli (786-7105).

Background:

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

Washington's campaign finance and disclosure law was first enacted by voter initiative in 1972 and is codified under chapter 42.17A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The law regulates campaign contributions and expenditures and requires the disclosure of campaign financing, lobbyist activity, and the financial affairs of elected officials, candidates, and executive state officers. The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) enforces campaign finance and disclosure laws and has the authority to develop procedures, adopt rules, investigate complaints, and impose civil penalties for violations. The PDC is empowered to provide access to information about the financing of political campaigns, lobbyist expenditures, and the financial affairs of public officials and candidates.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The campaign finance and disclosure law and certain other related statutes are recodified under a new title of the RCW—Title 29B. Numerous technical changes are made to correct internal references.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2026.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a technical bill and should not have any substantive changes. Campaign finance laws have been changed many times, so the organization of the law under the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) needs a little bit of curating. This reorganization is helpful to the public and those who need to follow the law. The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) prefers to have the bill codified in Title 42 RCW which houses other government accountability laws. It does not make sense to codify this under Title 29 RCW where the election laws are codified.

(Opposed) This is an expensive solution in search of a problem. This recodification can cause confusion for people who have to consult these laws. It would also have a significant financial impact on the PDC, which is a small agency, with the fiscal note showing a cost of \$250,000 over three years. This is a significant amount of money to pay for something that is not benefiting anyone or making any substantive change. The PDC already lacks the resources to accomplish other important tasks and are unlikely to have the resources to implement this act.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Sean Flynn, Public Disclosure Commission.

(Opposed) Conner Edwards.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.