

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5840

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
State Government & Tribal Relations

**Title:** An act relating to making adjustments to the schedule for reporting campaign finance expenditure activity.

**Brief Description:** Making adjustments to the schedule for reporting campaign finance expenditure activity.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, J., Valdez, Dozier and Nobles; by request of Public Disclosure Commission).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government & Tribal Relations: 2/24/26, 2/25/26 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**  
**(As Amended by Committee)**

- Requires registered political committees to submit a statement of participation each January to indicate if the committee is planning to participate in any election that year.
- Directs candidates, political committees, and incidental committees to file an expenditure report by the tenth day of each month, reporting on the previous month's activity.
- Requires candidates, incidental committees, and political committees expecting to participate in a primary or general election to file an expenditure report on the twenty-fifth day of July, September, and October of that election year.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS**

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*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.*

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Mena, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Waters, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Doglio and Farivar.

**Staff:** Connor Schiff (786-7093).

**Background:**

*The Public Disclosure Commission.*

In 1972 Initiative 276 created the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC), a five-member, bipartisan citizen commission, to enforce the provisions of the campaign finance disclosure law. The PDC regulates many financial aspects of political campaigns, including contributions to candidates and expenditures related to ballot measures, as well as political advertisements and electioneering communications.

*Political, Continuing, and Incidental Committees.*

Among the entities that the PDC regulates are political committees, which are groups, except for candidates, that have the expectation of receiving contributions or making expenditures in support of or in opposition to any candidate or ballot measure. A continuing political committee is a political committee that is an organization of continuing existence not limited to participation in any particular election campaign or election cycle.

The PDC also regulates incidental committees, which are nonprofit organizations that incidentally make contributions or expenditures in excess of \$35,000 in a calendar year and receive at least \$15,000 from a single source.

*Statement of Organization.*

Each political committee must file a statement of organization with the PDC that includes certain information, including contact information for the committee and its officers, a statement whether the committee is a continuing committee, and information on each candidate or ballot proposition the committee is supporting or opposing. Any material change to the information previously submitted in a statement of organization must be reported to the PDC within 10 days of the change.

*When Participating in an Election.*

With respect to a particular election, an entity participates in the election if it:

- makes either a monetary or in-kind contribution to a candidate;
- makes an independent expenditure or electioneering communication in support of or opposition to a candidate;
- endorses a candidate before contributions are made by a subsidiary corporation or local unit with respect to that candidate or that candidate's opponent;
- makes a recommendation regarding whether a candidate should be supported or opposed before a contribution is made by a subsidiary corporation or local unit with respect to that candidate or that candidate's opponent; or

- directly or indirectly collaborates or consults with a subsidiary corporation or local unit on matters relating to the support of or opposition to a candidate.

*Contributions and Expenditure Reports.*

All contributions received and expenses incurred by a full-reporting candidate or committee must be reported to the PDC as part of an expenditure report. Expenditures may include payments for services, subscriptions, political advertising, repayment of loans, contracts or agreements, promises to pay or debts, reimbursements to volunteers, and filing fees or other items paid for by the candidate.

Candidates, political committees, and incidental committees participating in an election must file reports with the PDC detailing all contributions received and expenditures made by the candidate or committee. These reports are due 21 and 7 days immediately preceding an election, and the tenth day of the first full month after an election. This timeline applies to primaries and general and special elections. Reports filed 21 and 7 days preceding an election must show receipts and expenditures as of the end of one business day before the report is filed.

During a month that a candidate or political committee is not participating in an election campaign, expenditure reports must be filed if a candidate or committee receives or expends at least \$750 in the preceding calendar month. This report is filed on the tenth day of the month.

A continuing political committee must file an expenditure report if the committee receives or expends at least \$750 in the preceding calendar month. This report is filed on the tenth day of the month.

All reports filed on the tenth day of the month must report all contributions received and expenditures made from the closing date of the last report filed through the last day of the month preceding that report.

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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

*Statement of Participation.*

A statement of organization by a political committee must include a statement that indicates whether the committee expects to participate in any election campaign for the calendar year in which the statement of organization is filed.

By January 1 of each year, each political committee must submit a statement to the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) to indicate whether the committee expects to participate in any election campaign that year. This statement must provide information on each candidate or ballot proposition the committee is supporting or opposing if not previously provided.

Any change to the statement of participation to indicate the committee is expecting to participate in one or more election campaigns must be made within 24 hours of such participation. Any change to the statement to indicate the committee is not expecting to participate in an election campaign for the primary or general election may only be made before July 1 of the same year.

*When Participating in an Election.*

The circumstances in which an entity is considered to participate in a particular election are expanded to include when the entity makes an expenditure in support of or opposition to a ballot proposition. An entity participates in an election when the entity makes an independent expenditure in support of or opposition to a candidate, regardless of the monetary value of the expenditure.

*Contributions and Expenditure Reports.*

Candidates, political committees, and incidental committees must file with the PDC expenditure reports on the tenth day of each month of the year.

The following entities must also file a monthly expenditure report on the twenty-fifth day of July, September, and October of the same year:

- any candidate in the primary or general election of that year;
- any political committee expecting to participate in the primary or general election of that year;
- any incidental committee; and
- any political committee that has not changed its statement of participation before July 1 to indicate the committee is not expecting to participate in an election campaign for the primary or general election.

Reports filed on the tenth day of the month must include all contributions received and expenditures made from the closing date of the last report filed through the last day of the month preceding the date of the current report, except the reports filed in the months of July through October must report all contributions received and expenditures made through the end of two business days before the date of the report.

Reports filed on the twenty-fifth day of the month must report all contributions received and expenditures made from the closing date of the last report filed through the end of two business days before the date of the report.

For reports filed between January and June, a candidate or political committee not participating in any election during that period may satisfy the monthly expenditure reporting requirements by filing a certification, if the total contributions received and total expenditures made since the last report do not exceed \$750.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill removes new language that requires certain candidates, political committees, and incidental committees to file an expenditure report on the twenty-fifth day of August.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 2028.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This proposal is the product of years of work by the Public Disclosure Commission. The changes intend to align campaign reporting with the vote-by-mail system. The proposal creates consistency and transparency. The new reporting deadlines are anchored to clear dates instead of being based on the date of the election.

(Opposed) This proposal does some good things, but these are outweighed by the number and frequency of the C-4 reporting requirements in the bill. Washington already has some of the most burdensome campaign finance reporting requirements and this proposal increases that burden and creates busy work. There is no good reason for increasing the burden. Additional reports in August and September increase the burden when there is little activity occurring. The increased burden will fall most heavily on those who can least afford it. The proposal will increase the number of complaints because of the rapid fire deadlines. Campaign professionals do not support these changes. The extra reports are not worth the extra burden for the few professionals that are doing this job. The current system is chaotic, though adequate. This proposal increases the chaos as there is a lot of work required with tracking down vendors and people associated with a campaign.

(Other) Some of the proposed changes are appreciated, but reporting requirements that are not consistent with the \$750 threshold should be made consistent with the threshold. This threshold is a clear dollar amount that provides more clarity for those submitting reports, including grassroots campaigns.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Sean Flynn, Public Disclosure Commission; and Kim Bradford.

(Opposed) Conner Edwards, Professional Campaign Treasurer, CG Edwards PLLC; Abbot Taylor; Jason Michaud, Professional Campaign Treasurer; and Tim Eyman, Initiative Activist.

(Other) Sharon Hanek, Professional compliance.

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