

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee
Tricia Melillo 271-3077

HB 263, relative to campaign finance reform.

Hearing Date: May 3, 2021

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Birdsell, Ward, Soucy and Perkins Kwoka

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill repeals voluntary expenditure limits, increases the expenditure and contribution reporting threshold for all political entities, and modifies the maximum contribution amount a person may contribute to candidate committees and political committees.

Sponsors:

Rep. Sweeney

Rep. Alexander Jr.

Rep. Berry

Who supports the bill: Rep. Joe Sweeney

Who opposes the bill: There are 91 names signed in opposition of this bill. To view the sign in sheet, please contact the Legislative Aide for the Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee, Tricia Melillo, at tricia.melillo@leg.state.nh.us

Who is neutral on the bill: David Scanlan

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Joe Sweeney

- The goal of this legislation is to streamline the existing practices relative to campaign finance, remove barriers to entry for new candidates, and decrease confusion surrounding candidate filing.
- These changes will insure that all candidates, whether they are running for the first time or the fortieth time can navigate and understand the NH campaign finance system.
- The incentive provided under current law to for candidates to agree to a voluntary expenditure limit is an increase in the amount of money a candidate can raise per donor, per election period.
- There are three election periods in the current campaign finance structure.
- The exploratory phase before filing, the primary election phase, and the general election phase.
- The amounts are written into statute and do not increase cycle to cycle to reflect increase cost of campaigns or operations as a candidate.
- Candidates who do not agree to limit their expenditures are capped at raising \$7,000 per donor per complete two year cycle.
- Most candidates do not agree to the voluntary expenditure limit.

- This bill will remove the voluntary expenditure limit and the exploratory phase from existing state law.
- It also changes the limits per election to \$3,500 per donor period.
- Additionally, this legislation will reduce the candidate filing form by about a third and streamline the process with only two periods during the cycle.
- There is an additional provision that increases the amount PACs are allowed to raise from \$10,000 per cycle to \$20,000.
- This change will put New Hampshire's PAC fundraising in line with current federal limits.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None

Neutral Information Presented:

David Scanlan – Deputy Secretary of State

- They do not have an opinion on the changes in this bill.
- Campaign finance laws in New Hampshire are relatively confusing and sometimes they are called on to try and explain them.
- He would be happy to work with members of the legislature to clean up the language so that it is easier for everyone to follow.
- Senator Gray asked if this legislation would add an extra burden on the Secretary of State's office.
 - Mr. Scanlan replied that they would have to make some minor changes to the online campaign finance system which they deal with often and it is not a problem.

TJM

Date Hearing Report completed: May 7, 2021