

SB 177 Opponent
1 March 2025
Melissa Campbell
Senate District 9

Chair Thompson and Members of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee:

I write today in opposition to the campaign finance bill that will open all contribution limits to state party committees. In the House, there were no proponents, one neutral, and the rest were citizen opponents. (HB 2054) Even if you're not concerned about individual limits increasing, the unrestricted party committee contributions fundamentally alter the balance of influence in Kansas elections. My biggest concern with SB177 is the removal of limits on contributions to or by party committees, which could lead to several potential abuses:

- 1) Unlimited Party spending as a loophole – Without contribution limits, wealthy donors or special interests can easily bypass individual candidate limits (like we the people citizens) by giving massive amounts to party committees, which could then funnel money to candidates. This undermines the purpose of individual contribution caps.
- 2) Increased influence of wealthy donors – Removing party committee limits allows a few individuals or entities with deep pockets to exert outsized influence over elections, which easily drowns out the voices of regular voters.
- 3) Potential corruption – Unlimited contributions to party committees create a risk of backdoor quid pro quo arrangements, and that is where donors expect policy favors in return for their financial support. Candidates and their campaign coordinators and staff should be above reproach in how they conduct themselves.
- 4) National Party money flooding State elections – Without limits, large national donors or party-affiliated groups could channel significant funds into Kansas elections, which will undoubtedly reduce local control and potentially shift the focus away from Kansas-specific issues, which is wrong.
- 5) Lack of transparency & accountability – While party committees are required to disclose contributions, the sheer volume of unlimited donations could make it harder for voters to track who is funding campaigns and what interests are at play.
- 6) Escalation of campaign costs – With unlimited money flowing through party committees, candidates may feel pressured to raise even more funds to remain competitive, leading to a huge race in campaign spending.

A link here shows a leaked document from findings in the Ethics Commission investigation from 2022.
<https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/kansas-republican-dissidents-put-spotlight-ethics-investigation-and-effort-rewrite-state>

I urge you to dig into the documents and understand the risks associated with passing legislation of this magnitude. Please do not do it.

Lastly, in studying a near-twin bill in the House, HB 2054, I noticed they have crossed out the effective date from Statute Book at the very bottom and inserted Kansas Register. I don't know why they did that, but it appears they want this made into law very quickly and I can't help but wonder if they still think that

the Ethics Commission might charge those under investigation with a crime and they want to be able to say, "I was charged under the new law so am not guilty." It's almost like some know they are still in trouble.

Please keep transparency, accountability, corruption, and special interests out of our elections. We the People should have the voice on who should represent us. Protect integrity by stopping this bill in committee.

Thank you,

Melissa Campbell
Senate District 9