

Campaign Contribution Limits; Senate Sub. for HB 2054

Senate Sub. for HB 2054 amends provisions in the Campaign Finance Act (Act) to increase limits on certain campaign contributions and eliminate limits on contributions made by party committees to candidates for certain elections.

Contributions to Campaigns

The bill increases aggregate limits for each of the following campaigns for each primary and general election:

- For the pair of offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor or other statewide offices, from \$2,000 to \$4,000;
- For the office of member of the House of Representatives, district judge, district attorney, or a candidate for local office whose jurisdiction has a population less than 50,000, from \$500 to \$1,000; and
- For the office of state senator or member of the State Board of Education, or a candidate for local office whose jurisdiction has a population of 50,000 or more, from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

The bill also increases the amount any person may contribute to any candidate or candidate committee in cash for any primary or general election from \$100 to \$200.

Applicability

Under continuing law, these limits apply to:

- Persons except party committees, the candidate, or the candidate's spouse; and
- Political committees.

The bill eliminates contribution limits made by party committees to candidates for each general election. [*Note:* Party committees will be subject to the contribution limits listed above for a primary election at which two or more candidates are seeking the party nomination.]

The bill clarifies that no expenditures made by a party committee in support of a candidate, with or without a candidate's cooperation or consent, constitutes a contribution.

Contributions to Party Committees

The bill increases aggregate limits on contributions by persons other than a party committee and by a national party committee to:

- \$35,000 per calendar year to a state party committee, recognized political committee for the Senate, or recognized political committee for the House of Representatives; and
- \$10,000 per calendar year to a congressional district party committee or county party committee.

[*Note:* The bill replaces the following limits on contributions to party committees:

- Contributions by a person other than a national party committee or a political committee to a state party committee must not exceed \$15,000 per calendar year;
- Contributions by a person other than a national party committee or a political committee to any other party committee must not exceed \$5,000 per calendar year;
- Contributions by a national party committee to a state party committee must not exceed \$25,000 per calendar year;
- Contributions by a national party committee to any other party committee must not exceed \$10,000 per calendar year; and
- Contributions by a political committee to a party committee must not exceed \$5,000 per calendar year.]

Receipt of Contributions

The bill allows a candidate or the candidate's committee to accept a contribution for both the primary and general election prior to the date of the primary election if the candidate or the candidate's committee uses an acceptable accounting method to distinguish between which contributions are received for the primary election and which are for the general election.

The bill provides examples of acceptable accounting methods, including, but not limited to, the designation of separate accounts for each election or the establishment of separate books and records for each election. The bill requires the authorized records of a candidate or the candidate's committee show the cash on hand prior to the primary election was, at all times, equal to or greater than the amount of contributions received and designated for the general election minus any disbursements made for the general election.

Definition of "Jurisdiction"

The bill defines the term "jurisdiction" to mean:

- The city, county, or school district if the candidate is seeking election to a local office that is elected at large in such city, county, or school district; and

- The electoral district if the candidate is seeking election as a member of a governing body that has member districts.