

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1131 (Delegate Glenn, *et al.*)  
Rules and Executive Nominations

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General Assembly - Members - Constituent Services Fund

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This bill authorizes a member of the General Assembly to establish a constituent services fund and to accept contributions to the fund. In a calendar year, a person may contribute up to \$500 to a member's fund, and a member may not spend more than \$80,000 from the fund. However, a person may contribute personal property valued at not more than \$1,000 per calendar year to a member's fund in excess of the \$500 limit. Also, a member may make unlimited contributions to the fund.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill does not materially affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** Personal property contributed to a member's fund must be valued at the fair market value of the property.

When a member leaves office or abolishes the fund, any unused funds must be used to either (1) pay any debts incurred in providing constituent services; or (2) make a donation to a nonprofit organization.

A member who establishes a fund must report all contributions made to the fund and all payments made from the fund on the member's campaign finance reports. A member may not use money in the fund to conduct campaign activities or to distribute campaign material.

## **Current Law/Background**

### *Campaign Finance Reporting*

For each election in which a campaign finance entity (including a ballot issue committee) participates, it generally must file campaign finance reports at various times prior to and after the primary and general elections. The reports must contain information required by the State Board of Election with respect to all contributions received and all expenditures made by or on behalf of the campaign finance entity during a reporting period. Annual reports generally must also be filed on the third Wednesday in January.

### *District Office Accounts*

Members of the General Assembly are eligible for funds to support offices and staff in their districts. In fiscal 2009, each Delegate and Senator received \$18,265, with slightly higher amounts for delegation offices and members of the leadership. The district office accounts can be used for office space and staff as well as communications, supplies, utilities, furniture, and equipment related to the district office. At least \$5,800 of the account must be used for staff compensation, and there are caps on the amount that may be spent on telephone and other communication expenses.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 17, 2011  
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