

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 982 (Senator Benson)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Election Law - Petition Fund Reports - Available Online

This bill requires the State Board of Elections (SBE) to make statements filed with State law referendum petitions and petitions relating to a county charter, which show the contribution and expenditures for the petition, publicly available on SBE's Internet site.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2012.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill does not affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: At the time of filing a State law referendum petition or a petition relating to a county charter (for creation of a charter board, nomination of charter board members, or a charter amendment), the person who files the petition must also file a signed statement, under penalty of perjury, showing the contributions and expenditures for the petition, including:

- the name and post office address of every contributor to the expense of the petition;
- the amount contributed by each contributor; and

- the name and address of each person to whom any money was paid or promised for providing a service related to the petition.

If the statement is not filed with the petition, the petition cannot ultimately be certified as having satisfied all the requirements of the law.

Background: The bill implements a recommendation of the Commission to Study Campaign Finance Law, which was established by Joint Resolution 1 of 2011. The commission issued an initial report in January 2012. In this report, the commission recommended that, in order to have greater transparency and disclosure, legislation should be introduced requiring that statements of contributions and expenditures filed with State law referendum petitions and petitions relating to a county charter be made available online on the SBE website.

The Commission to Study Campaign Finance Law is given relatively broad discretion to examine the State's campaign finance laws and activity in the State and other jurisdictions, but is also charged with considering or examining various specific issues ranging from contribution limits to public campaign financing to enforcement of election laws. The commission held its first two meetings in December 2011 and January 2012 and the commission's recommendations in the initial report originated from an effort to develop a list of noncomplex proposals that would offer immediate improvements to the existing campaign finance system. The commission must submit a final report by December 31, 2012.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1275 (Delegate Cardin, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections, Commission to Study Campaign Finance Law, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 5, 2012
mc/hlb

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