



# Maryland State Board of Elections

HB 376 – Delegate Washington

**Election Law- Campaign Finance- Protection of Contributor Information**

**Purpose:**

To prohibit the use of contributor information for commercial solicitations.

**Comments:**

The State Board of Elections supports the proposed legislation.

Recently, the State Board of Elections has been receiving numerous questions regarding the use of the contributor information on the campaign finance reports. These inquiries focused on whether the publicly available online contribution information of an individual may be used for commercial solicitations by a vendor.

As you are aware, the State Board of Elections is required to make campaign finance reports easily accessible to the public. The reports are necessary for voters to make informed decisions at the ballot box regarding who is funding political campaigns. Contributor information on a campaign finance report includes the name and home address of individuals and in certain cases, employer and occupation information of those individuals.

The proposed legislation centers on protecting the privacy of those individuals who make contributions to campaigns from commercial solicitations. Contributor information may still be used for purposes other than commercial solicitations (such as electoral and educational purposes). Additionally, there are no restrictions on the publication or use of campaign finance reports by the media or other press outlets for purposes other than commercial solicitations. However, the law does prevent the publication of contributor information through an intermediary media outlet if the sole intent and purpose was to circumvent the commercial solicitation prohibition.

Finally, the proposed legislation is modeled after federal law which has been in effect since 1976.

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