



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 34 Campaign Finance - Contributions, Expenditures, or Donations by Foreign-Influenced Corporations or Foreign Principals

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

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The League of Women Voters supports campaign finance regulations that enhance political equality for all citizens, ensure transparency, protect representative democracy from distortion by undisclosed contributions and combat corruption. As noted in the fiscal note for this bill, “Federal law prohibits a foreign national from making, directly or indirectly, a contribution or donation of money or other thing of value . . . in connection with a federal, State, or local election. A foreign national also may not make, directly or indirectly, a contribution or donation to a committee of a political party, or an expenditure, independent expenditure, or disbursement for an electioneering communication.”

The legislation provides a mechanism for knowing when a foreign influenced corporation has made a political contribution. This bill would require the Chief Executive Officer of any corporation that makes a political contribution to sign an oath, within 7 days of making the contribution, stating that the corporation is not a foreign-influenced corporation on the date the contribution was made. It goes on to state that if the treasurer of a campaign finance entity knowingly receives a contribution in violation of this law, they may not use the contribution and must return it to the contributor. The bill contains specific language defining a foreign-influenced corporation.

As we all know, there has been verified influence in American elections by foreign actors. This legislation is an effort to reduce such influence in Maryland elections and we urge a favorable report.