



Maryland State Board of Elections

SB 296 – Senator Simonaire 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 this legislation.

Recently, the State Board of Elections has received 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 voting decisions regarding who is funding political campaigns. Contributor information on a campaign finance report includes an individual's name and home address and in certain cases, employer and occupation information.

The legislation prevents contributor information from being used for commercial solicitations, including the publication of this information through an intermediary media outlet if the sole intent and purpose of publication was to circumvent the commercial solicitation prohibition. Contributor information can be used for electoral and educational purposes and by the media for purposes other than commercial solicitations.

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

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