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**HB 1120**

**ELECTION LAW – CANDIDATE TRUTHFULNESS – OATH**

There is not one among us who has not heard of George Santos and the mockery he has made of the election process without apparent consequences thus far as to his myriad of lies.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Constitution protects political speech, so the misrepresentations of candidates made while running for office is shrouded with this protection. However, the purpose of HB1120 is to provide the public with the foundation by which a candidate may be prevented from entering a race for an elected office, removed from the ballot before the election occurs or removed from public office should the discovery of falsehoods be made after a successful bid for election to public office. HB1120 provides for ethical disclosures made BEFORE the campaign begins in the form of OATH affirming HONESTY by a prospective candidate.

The oath of Honesty for Public Office Affirmation provides an “OPT OUT” clause should the prospective candidate choose not to affirm their intention to be truthful in disclosures to the public during their bid for public office. The oath, however executed by the prospective candidate, however completed becomes public record subject to public disclosure. Thus, the information is there for the public to make a decision as to the where they should cast their vote.

The oath also does not place any restrictions on a candidate, once registered, from embellishing, editorializing or “puffing up” information, including such personal information as their education, whether they hold honorary or actual degrees, their possible criminal background, any formal membership and/or collaborations with any organizations, their family background, their academic and/or vocational achievements, any titles and/or accolades they hold, whether earned or honorary and past disqualifications of candidacy or removal from public office. This clause in the oath reaffirms the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment protected political speech of each and every American.

Finally, the oath of Honesty for Public Office Affirmation DOES provide the boundary-setting framework by which an prospective candidate or elected an official may be later scrutinized by their fellow Marylanders removal from office subject to the penalties of perjury or public reprimand, as deemed appropriate.

HB1120 is a timely and appropriate response to the never-ending inundation of lies and deceits exposed in our sister state of New York.

**PLEASE ENTER A FAVORABLE REPORT FOR HB1120.**