



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senate Sends Strengthened Missouri Campaign and Lobbying Ethics Bill to Governor

Measure Calls for Transparency with Full, Timely Reporting

JEFFERSON CITY – Legislation that significantly reforms Missouri's current campaign fundraising laws as well as limits travel expenses and entertainment costs lawmakers can accept from lobbyists passed the General Assembly today and moves to the governor. Sen. Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, handled the bill and said it was the most important legislation the Legislature passed this year.

"We've inherited a system of reporting and ethics laws that need to be updated," Shields said. "Every Missourian has the right to know how much money candidates are raising and where it's coming from."

The measure, House Bill 1900, removes the campaign contribution caps to individual candidates. Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, says allowing citizens to contribute directly to a candidate improves transparency.

"Currently, larger contributions are hidden and funneled through legislative and political action committees. It has become a form of legal money-laundering," Gibbons said. "By removing the candidate limits, these shady committees should no longer play an important role. For each candidate, the public should know where the money came from and how it was spent."

The measure also requires candidates to file full disclosure reports electronically to end delays in uploading the information to the State Ethics Commission's public website.

In the final twelve days leading up to an election, candidates will have to file campaign money reports everyday listing any donations or expenses more than \$250. Candidates will also be required to disclose who they work for, including any money they may earn by working for other candidates or on other campaigns.

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ETHICS REFORM

PAGE 2

"People believe, and they are probably right, that in the days before an election a lot of money is moving around and changing hands," Shields said. "The public should be able to follow that movement and know where campaign donations are coming from rather than reading about it in the paper after they have already cast their vote."

The ethics reform bill also limits the timeframe when lawmakers can accept campaign contributions. Candidates for state representative, senator and statewide offices can not accept campaign contributions during the legislative session which runs from January to mid-May each year.

"Perception is reality and if candidates are raising money while we're in session people could draw the conclusion that bills are being passed for the wrong reasons," Shields said. "It is also important that elected officials refrain from accepting over the top excesses from lobbyists."

Currently, any expense a lobbyist makes on behalf of an elected official must be reported to the State Ethics Commission. Lawmakers can accept tickets to ball games or concerts, or for travel and lodging. The bill would require entertainment expenses be reported in detail. Out-of-state travel and lodging expenses could no longer be paid for by lobbyists unless the Administration Committee in the House or Senate approved it in advance. It also ends the proliferation of small caucuses consisting of at least 10 General Assembly members. These caucuses currently can receive lobbyist expenses that go unreported because of the number of legislators in attendance.

"If a lawmaker gets treated by a lobbyist, it's going to be reported," he said. "People need to know who is getting what."

The bill now moves to the governor's desk where it awaits his signature to become law.

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