



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Free-Will Based Campaign Finance Policy

Recently, the Senate spent a good deal of time discussing campaign finance. The issue is a contentious one for members on both sides of the aisle, and there are a lot of ideas on to how to make sure the system remains fair, ethical, and balanced. This is a debate that will continue throughout this year's session with the ultimate goal of making sure that the campaign finance system works the way it is supposed to. However, there are two proposals that came up during the recent debate that I felt would have been destructive to the system.

One proposed amendment that was debated on the floor would have created a publicly-funded pool to finance candidates' campaigns. My problem with taxpayer-funded campaigns is that the process allows for the possibility of donated money being used by candidates or for issues that the taxpayer opposes. Under the current system, citizens are able to make donations to specific candidates or causes based on their personal beliefs and support. As I said on the Senate floor, I do not believe that mindless political expression is in any way superior to purposeful political expression. I joined the majority of my Senate colleagues in voting against this amendment, and I will continue to work to make sure that any public funding of campaigns does not come to fruition.

Another amendment would have allowed the Missouri Ethics Commission to take civil and criminal action against any entity that formed multiple committees for the purpose of avoiding or frustrating the contribution limits. This amendment would have essentially required the commission to speculate on the motive of that entity. Laws based on an interpretation of motive rather than responding to actual conduct or actions are always a bad idea. By complying with the laws that are in place, the intent cannot be to break the law. Fortunately, this amendment was also not successful. For those that believe that the rules of forming a political action committee are too lax, the appropriate remedy would be to change those rules, not to

empower bureaucrats and declare that some of those committees are motivated to circumvent the law, while others are motivated to comply with the law.

The debate over campaign finance is in no way over, but I do believe that we made some good steps towards making sure that unreasonable proposals do not corrupt the system. It is important that people feel they can trust those that they elect, and any reform in the campaign finance system needs to promote the reliability of the candidates. I am confident that my colleagues and I can work together to create fair and logical campaign finance policy.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*