

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Carrier: Sen. Brown

Revenue: No revenue impact

Fiscal: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass the A-Engrossed Measure as Amended and Be Printed B-Engrossed

Vote: 21 – 0 – 0

House – Yeas: D. Edwards, Galizio, Garrard, Hanna, Jenson, Morgan, Nathanson, Nolan, Shields
– Nays:
– Exc:

Senate – Yeas: Bates, Carter, Devlin, Gordly, Johnson, Morse, Nelson, Schrader, Verger, Westlund, Whitsett, Winters
– Nays:
– Exc:

Prepared By: Ken Rocco, Legislative Fiscal Office

Meeting Date: 6/15/07

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: This measure makes changes to government ethic laws and establishes a funding mechanism for the Government Standards and Practices Commission (GSPC). Requires quarterly filings of expenditure statements by lobbyists and directs GSPC to make the statements publicly available on the Internet. Increases penalties from \$1,000 to \$5,000 for violations of lobbying or government ethics laws. Sets monetary limits on gifts received by public officials from people with legislative or administrative interests. Exempts certain food, beverage, travel, and lodging from the definition of gift. Exempts judges and the Judicial Department from gift limits. Modifies requirements for contents of statements of economic interest. Requires quarterly reporting of specified information by public officials and candidates. Authorizes public officials to establish legal expense trust funds to defray certain legal expenses upon the approval of GSPC. Declares emergency, effective upon passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Independent funding components
- Role of local governments in developing funding proposal
- Local government support for the proposed ethics law changes
- Exemption of judicial branch

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Establishes a funding mechanism to assess state agencies, local government entities, and special government bodies for the expenses of GSPC. Exempts, under certain circumstances, waivers of registration expenses or materials at continuing education events, expenses for in-state travel, and food or beverage consumed at receptions from the definition of gift.

BACKGROUND: In 1974, voters approved the establishment of statutes relating to the financial ethics and reporting by public officials. Provisions in ORS Chapter 244 and related statutes generally prohibit the use of office for financial gain, require filing of statements of economic interest, require disclosure of conflicts of interest, provide procedures for enforcement of violations, and provide sanctions for violations.

A “public official” is defined by ORS 244.020 (15) as any person “serving the State of Oregon or any of its political subdivisions or any other public body of the state as an officer, employee, agent or otherwise, and irrespective of whether the person is compensated for such services.” “Legislative or administrative interest” is defined by ORS 244.020 (10) as “an economic interest, distinct from that of the general public, in one or more bills, resolutions, regulations, proposals or other matters subject to the action or vote of a person acting in the capacity of a public official.”