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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



Chair: Special Committee on Energy
Co-Chair: Community & Regional Affairs
Vice-Chair: Labor & Commerce Committee
Member: Resources Committee
Member: Ways & Means Committee

REPRESENTATIVE CALVIN SCHRAGE

Sponsor Statement **House Bill 234 – Version I**

House Bill 234 updates Alaska's political donations limits and requires the Alaska Public Offices Commission to increase these limits every ten years based on Alaska's consumer inflation rates.

Last year, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the statutory campaign finance contribution limits in the *Thompson vs Hebdon* decision. Alaska has long touted strong and effective campaign finance laws and regulations which have helped to reduce perception and acts of quid pro quo and corruption in our electoral process. These regulations have served to promote better accountability and trust in our election system and elected officials.

This ruling created legal uncertainty over political contribution limits which have not been updated since the 2006 citizen's initiative. HB 234 seeks to bring the newly struck down contribution limit laws into compliance with the ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and ensure limits moving forward are in line with this ruling.

To accomplish this, HB 234 would double the current statutory contribution limits made to group entities, non-group entities, and candidates who seek to influence state or local elections. For example, a candidate could now accept \$1,000 per calendar year from an individual as opposed to the existing statutory \$500 individual contribution limit struck down by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

HB 234 directs the Alaska Public Office Commission to adjust all contribution limits for inflation every 10 years, rounding them to the nearest \$50 increment. This statutory change helps to ensure donation limits remain in compliance with the *Thompson v Hebdon* decision in perpetuity.