

Alaska State Legislature

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Senate President Kevin Meyer Senate District M

SB 5: Political Contribution Limits/Prohibition

In an effort to restore public trust and reduce corruption, or the appearance of corruption, in our campaign finance system, in 1996 the Alaska legislature passed sweeping campaign finance reforms. Included in legislation was a prohibition on all contributions by lobbyists to candidates outside of their own election district. What was not anticipated or addressed by the 1996 reforms, and is an issue that arose during this last election cycle, is the ability for a lobbyist to contribute to a political action group that is controlled by a legislator or other candidate for the legislature. This loophole in the law allows a sitting legislator, or a candidate for the legislature, to solicit, raise, and disperse funds from lobbyists, on behalf of a group that they control, thus circumventing the limit on lobbyists' contributions to candidates. Further, our state statutes explicitly state that a legislator may not solicit or accept funds in order to influence a state election during a regular or special session, however, there is no clear prohibition against a political action group controlled by a legislator doing so. In addition, SB 5 includes a prohibition on dispersing funds during a legislative session.

Senate Bill 5 will amend our state statutes to bolster our campaign finance laws by:

1. Closing the loophole that allows lobbyists to make political campaign contributions to groups headed by current lawmakers and candidates for the legislature outside of their district, and
2. Preventing groups controlled by a legislator or candidate for the legislature from soliciting, raising, or dispersing funds during a regular or special legislative session.

This measure is intended to protect against corruption – or the appearance of corruption – and restore the public's confidence in our campaign finance structure.

For more information, contact Edra Morledge in Senator Meyer's office at (907) 465-6874.