

Session

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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 C

House Bill 234 reinstates fair, reasonable, and constitutional political contribution limits, requires the Alaska Public Offices Commission to increase these limits every ten years based on Alaska's consumer inflation rates, and limits out-of-state donations in state and local campaigns.

Alaska has long touted strong and effective campaign finance laws which have helped to reduce the perception and acts of quid pro quo and corruption in our political process. These laws have served to promote better accountability and trust in our elections and elected officials. Last year, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the statutory campaign contribution limits, implemented by Alaskan voters in 2006 with 73% support, in the *Thompson v Hebdon* decision.

This ruling, and the Alaska Public Offices Commission's decision not to implement the new limits advised by commission staff, has created legal uncertainty and opened our state and local elections to the threat of unlimited funds from anywhere in the country. HB 234 creates new campaign contribution limit laws that are in compliance with the ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Supreme Court precedent, while ensuring limits remain constitutional moving forward.

To accomplish this, HB 234 moves Alaska's campaign contributions to a "per campaign period" basis, increases the individual-to-candidate limit from \$500 per year to \$2,000 per campaign period and the group-to-candidate limit from \$1,000 per year to \$4,000 per campaign period, and directs the Alaska Public Office Commission to adjust contribution limits for inflation every 10 years. These changes address the concerns laid out by the Ninth Circuit in their decision as well as Supreme Court precedent while upholding the expressed desire of Alaskan voters for fair and reasonable contribution limits in our elections.