

32ND ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Sponsor Statement for House Bill 245

“Political Campaign Contribution Limits”

HB 245 restores reasonable and common-sense limits on how much money individuals and groups can contribute to political candidates in State elections. Alaskans have repeatedly shown a preference for low limits on contributions to candidates, and in the absence of HB 245, or similar legislation, contributions may become limitless in upcoming elections. Campaign contributions are one of the most obvious ways that wealthy individuals and corporations try to corrupt politicians to serve their interests rather than the interests of all Alaskans. Alaska has historically recognized this risk in campaign contributions and since 1974 has restricted how much individuals can donate to politicians.

Between 2006 and 2021 Alaska Statutes placed that limit at \$500 over the course of a calendar year. In 2021, however, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that limit unconstitutional. The Court argued that because \$500 was unusually low, applied to all state races, and was not indexed with inflation to grow over time, that it infringed on donors’ freedom of speech and gave an unfair advantage to incumbents. In the aftermath of the decision, Alaska’s Public Office Commission set the individual-to-candidate limit at \$1,500. The people of Alaska must have a say on what the limit is, and new legislation is required unless we risk no limit at all.

HB 245 addresses the Court’s concerns by repealing AS 15.13.070(c) and replacing it with new language. The original \$500 limit passed by 71% approval among voters in 2006 is closer to \$700 in today’s dollars. HB 245 uses that adjustment as the new limit on candidates to the State House. Limits on individuals rise accordingly to \$1,000 for candidates to the Senate, and \$1,500 to candidates for Governor. The new law satisfies the Court’s constitutionality test by adjusting for inflation and differentiating the limits for different levels of public office.

In addition to restoring common-sense limits on how much money someone can give to a political candidate, HB 245 restores an urgently needed limit on how much candidates can raise from out-of-state contributors. Alaskans are highly attuned to the threat of corruption in our state politics. Out-of-state interests sometimes compete with Alaskan interests and the will of the voters. In order to both satisfy the Court’s decision that the old non-resident limit was unconstitutional and fight the appearance of corruption in our elections, HB 245 would limit candidates to raising no more than 50% of their money from out-of-state. I urge your support to bring these reforms back to Alaska.