

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Session

State Capitol, Rm. 9
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 465-2435
Fax: (907) 465-6615

Interim

1500 W. Benson
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 269-0120
Fax: (907) 269-0122



Finance Committee

- Chair, Judiciary Subcommittee
- Chair, Military and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee
- Public Safety Subcommittee

Sen.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI

March 14, 2022

The Honorable Roger Holland
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, AK 99801

Chair Holland and committee members:

Thank you for holding an initial hearing on Senate Bill 161, relating to the definition of political parties, on March 14, 2022. Please see the following response to Senator Myers' question.

1: Senator Myers asked how having official political party status affects Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) reporting requirements.

Political parties are treated differently from other groups under Alaska's campaign finance laws. If a party does not have official status and wishes to raise or expend funds it must register as a group (often referred to as a "political action committee" or "PAC"). Political parties are treated differently from ordinary groups in four ways:

- 1) Political parties can create "subordinate units" that can transfer unlimited amount of funds between themselves,¹ while groups can only transfer \$1,000 to another group annually.² Both the Alaska Republican Party and the Alaska Democratic Party have formed numerous subordinate units, examples include the Alaska Young Democrats and the Midnight Sun Republican Women's Club. APOC advisory opinion AO 97-02-CD explains subordinate units in greater detail.
- 2) Candidates can donate unused campaign funds to a political party after an election but cannot do so to a group.³ This means that candidates from parties that are not qualified cannot contribute excess funds to their party.

¹AS 15.13.065(b)

²AS 15.13.070(c)(2)

³AS 15.13.116(a)(2)(A)

- 3) Political parties can make larger contributions to candidates than groups can. Depending on the office sought, parties can donate between \$5,000 and \$100,000 to a candidate annually,⁴ while groups are limited to \$1,000 regardless of the office.⁵
- 4) While it is complicated by the recent decision by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in *Thompson v. Hebdon*, Alaska Statutes provide for higher contribution limits for individuals contributing to political parties than to groups. Individuals may contribute \$5,000 to a political party annually,⁶ but current statutes limit individuals' donations to groups to \$500.⁷ In *Thompson*, the court held that the \$5,000 limit on contributions to political parties was constitutional but that the \$500 limit on contributions to groups was not.

Thank you for your time and consideration, please do not hesitate to contact me or David Dunsmore of my staff at (907) 465-2435 with any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Wielechowski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot above the letter 'i' in "Wielechowski".

Senator Bill Wielechowski

⁴AS 15.13.070(d)

⁵AS 15.13.070(c)(1)

⁶AS 15.13.070(b)(2)

⁷AS 15.13.070(b)(1)