
Wisconsin Legislative Council

AMENDMENT MEMO



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2021 Senate Bill 718

Senate Amendment 1

2021 SENATE BILL 718

2021 Senate Bill 718 makes changes to the campaign finance law as recommended by the Wisconsin Ethics Commission, including the following:

- Expands the definition of “conduit” to permit individual conduit contributions to any committee. Under current law, conduit contributions may be made only to a candidate committee, legislative campaign committee, political party, or political action committee.
- Exempts local committees that register and file with a local filing officer from paying the required \$100 filing fee. Under the bill, only those committees that are required to register and file with the Ethics Commission must pay the \$100 filing fee.
- Clarifies the general procedure and eligibility requirements for state and local candidates to claim an exemption from filing campaign finance reports. Under the bill, incorrectly filing an exemption request is not a basis for denying ballot access. The bill also increases the calendar year threshold for committees to be eligible to claim an exemption from filing campaign finance reports from \$2,000 to \$2,500 in a calendar year.
- Requires committees to report all loans they receive. Under current law, only loans in an aggregate amount or value in excess of \$20 must be reported.
- Amends the due date for the September campaign finance report from the fourth Tuesday in September to September 30.
- Clarifies the reporting requirements for entities spending \$2,500 or more in the aggregate on express advocacy during the period beginning 60 days leading up to an election.
- Modifies the periods during which contribution limits are calculated. Under the bill, the period runs from January 1 until December 31 for officials elected in a general election and from July 1 until June 30 for officials elected in a spring election.
- Eliminates the requirement that a committee must report a donation made to a charitable organization or common school fund no later than five days after the donation is made.
- Requires any express advocacy supporting or opposing a referendum to identify its source. Under current law, only express advocacy relating to a candidate must identify its source.

The bill takes effect on the first day of the first continuing report period following publication.

SENATE AMENDMENT 1

Senate Amendment 1 delays the bill’s effective date to January 3, 2023, the date on which legislators elected at the 2022 General Election will be sworn into office.

BILL HISTORY

Senate Amendment 1 was offered by Senator Bernier on January 26, 2022. On February 9, 2022, the Senate Committee on Elections, Elections Process Reform, and Ethics adopted Senate Amendment 1 and passed Senate Bill 718, as amended, on votes of Ayes, 5; Noes, 0.

KBO:ksm