

House Government Operations Committee

February 26th, 2025

Bill: HB 504 – Financial and Conflict of Interest Disclosure by Candidates

Sponsor: Representative Lisa Shephard

Floor Sponsor: Senator Ronald Winterton

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill amends provisions related to campaign finance and conflict of interest disclosures.

Discussion: Among other things, HB 504 introduces new requirements for candidates seeking elective office in counties, municipalities, and special districts. It mandates that candidates submit a conflict-of-interest disclosure statement when filing a declaration of candidacy and requires those filling midterm vacancies to provide financial reports on contributions and expenditures. Election officers must ensure these disclosures are publicly accessible on official websites. The Bill also clarifies when vacancies occur and requires county and municipal legislative bodies to notify clerks of midterm vacancies. Additionally, it establishes deadlines for these processes and updates campaign finance reporting deadlines for candidates filling midterm vacancies in state and legislative offices.

The Bill also revises conflict-of-interest disclosure requirements by eliminating the need for candidates to disclose spousal employment details unless the employment poses a potential conflict of interest. It further allows candidates or officeholders to request redaction of personal information if they or their spouse are at-risk government employees.

Representative Shephard emphasized the importance of transparency in the electoral process, highlighting that while conflict-of-interest and financial disclosure statements are already required for candidates running in an election, they currently do not apply to individuals filling midterm vacancies. This Bill addresses that gap. During the discussion, Committee members raised concerns about requiring candidates to disclose their spouse's place of employment and other personal details. The sponsor agreed, explaining that she worked with the drafting attorney to remove the requirement unless the candidate or officeholder believes the employment presents a conflict of interest.

Ricky Hatch, Weber County Clerk and Chair of the Clerk's Association, testified that, while the clerks do not have an official stance on the Bill, he consulted several county clerks to assess their ability to manage the collection, posting, and storage of the required disclosures. None expressed concerns about implementing the Bill's requirements. The Utah County Chief Deputy Clerk testified in his personal capacity in support of the Bill.

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

N/V: 5

Outcome: HB 504, as amended, passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

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