

Mr. Chairman Proctor and members of the Elections Committee,

My name is Rob Fillion, I am representing RJF Consulting, LLC a political consulting firm which I currently own. I am here today in support of HB 2054 allowing for increased contribution limits to political candidates and political party committees.

Money is always going to be a factor in how candidates get their messages out, and money will be spent regardless. The question before you today is really a matter of transparency. Low contribution limits force the majority of campaign spending in large races to C4s, or political action committees, which are not transparent. The more the limits are increased, the greater the proportion of expenditures that will be transparent and public. It's that simple. The money is going to be spent regardless. So, it's better to have high limits to see where the money is coming from.

Having managed races at every level of state government, the biggest obstacle for all candidates is fundraising. The current limits inhibit the candidate's ability to get their message out to voters due to inflation and the growing media markets.

Currently, candidates for statewide office often loan themselves hundreds of thousands of dollars to kick start their campaigns. Sometimes, they're able to raise enough to repay loans to their campaign, but often, they spend that money. This necessity, in part due to current campaign finance limits, prevents people with lesser means from seeking higher office. Increasing contribution limits may provide opportunities for middle class candidates to seek statewide office.

Our current contribution limits are out of date and out of step with the rest of the country. A number of states don't have any campaign finance limits, including Nebraska and Texas.

Campaign finance limits were last raised in Kansas in 1996 when a gallon of gas cost \$1.23. A first-class stamp cost 32 cents. Today, the average price of a gallon of gas in Kansas is approximately \$2.85. A postage stamp is 73 cents. Both metrics matter in a campaign as candidates use mail and fuel to reach voters.

This bill also seeks to increase contribution limits to political parties. Political parties and their committees face the same inflationary pressures that candidates do. The cost of staffing and conventions is on the rise. I urge your support of this measure because it could save Kansas taxpayers money and franchise Kansas voters.

In 2024, the Kansas Legislature approved millions of dollars to host a presidential primary election. However, Kansas political parties are often tasked with hosting caucuses to select presidential nominees. The caucuses are expensive, requiring hundreds of thousands of dollars and hundreds of man hours. Increasing contribution limits will assist parties in this critical function that allows Kansans to take part in selecting presidential nominees.

Money will always impact elections and how a candidate's message will be brought to voters. House Bill 2054 will make election spending more transparent and clean. Political Action Committees will always be relevant, but increasing contribution limits will move money to the candidate. A candidate committee is much more careful with messaging as it is directly tied to the character of the candidate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.