

**CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT BRIEF
SENATE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 2054**

As Agreed to March 26, 2025

Brief*

Senate Sub. for HB 2054 would amend provisions in the Campaign Finance Act (Act) to increase limits on certain campaign contributions and eliminate limits on contributions made by party committees to candidates.

Contributions to Campaigns

The bill would increase aggregate limits for each of the following campaigns for each primary and general election:

- For the pair of offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor or other statewide offices, from \$2,000 to \$4,000;
- For the office of the House of Representatives, district judge, district attorney, or a candidate for local office whose jurisdiction has a population less than 50,000, from \$500 to \$1,000; and
- For the office of state senator or member of the State Board of Education, or a candidate for local office whose jurisdiction has a population of 50,000 or more, from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

The bill would also increase the amount any person may contribute to any candidate or candidate committee in cash for any primary or general election from \$100 to \$200.

Applicability

Under continuing law, these limits apply to:

- Persons except party committees, the candidate, or the candidate's spouse; and
- Political committees.

*Conference committee report briefs are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. No summary is prepared when the report is an agreement to disagree. Conference committee report briefs may be accessed on the Internet at <https://klrd.gov/>

The bill would eliminate contribution limits made by party committees to candidates for each general election. [Note: Party committees would be subject to the contribution limits listed above for a primary election at which two or more candidates are seeking the party nomination.]

The bill would also clarify that no expenditures made by a party committee in support of a candidate, with or without a candidate's cooperation or consent, would constitute a contribution.

Contributions to Party Committees

The bill would increase aggregate limits on contributions by persons other than a party committee and by a national party committee to:

- \$35,000 per calendar year to a state party committee, recognized political committee for the Senate, or recognized political committee for the House of Representatives; and
- \$10,000 per calendar year to a congressional district party committee or county party committee.

[Note: Current law provides the following limits on contributions to party committees:

- Contributions by a person other than a national party committee or a political committee to a state party committee must not exceed \$15,000 per calendar year;
- Contributions by a person other than a national party committee or a political committee to any other party committee must not exceed \$5,000 per calendar year;
- Contributions by a national party committee to a state party committee must not exceed \$25,000 per calendar year;
- Contributions by a national party committee to any other party committee must not exceed \$10,000 per calendar year; and
- Contributions by a political committee to a party committee must not exceed \$5,000 per calendar year.]

Receipt of Contributions

The bill would allow a candidate or their committee to accept a contribution for both the primary and general election prior to the date of the primary election if the candidate or their committee uses an acceptable accounting method to distinguish between which contributions are received for the primary election and which are for the general election.

The bill would provide examples of acceptable accounting methods, including, but not limited to, the designation of separate accounts for each election or the establishment of separate books and records for each election. The bill would require the authorized records of a candidate or their committee show the cash on hand prior to the primary election was, at all times, equal to or greater than the amount of contributions received and designated for the general election minus any disbursements made for the general election.

Definition of “Jurisdiction”

The bill would define the term “jurisdiction” to mean:

- The city, county, or school district if the candidate is seeking election to a local office that is elected at-large in such city, county, or school district; and
- The electoral district if the candidate is seeking election as a member of a governing body that has member districts.

Effective Date

The bill would be in effect upon publication in the *Kansas Register*.

Conference Committee Action

The Conference Committee agreed to the provisions of Senate Sub. for HB 2054, as amended by the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs, with the following modifications:

- Restore the limit on cash contributions to candidates;
- Increase the limit on cash contributions to candidates from \$100 to \$200 for any primary or general election;
- Decrease the limits for contributions made to a state party committee, recognized political committee for the Senate, or recognized political committee for the House of Representatives from \$50,000 to \$35,000 per calendar year;
- Decrease the limit for contributions made to a congressional district party committee from \$50,000 to \$10,000 per calendar year; and
- Decrease the limit for contributions made to a county party committee from \$20,000 to \$10,000 per calendar year.

Background

The Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs recommended a substitute bill incorporating the above-described provisions regarding campaign contributions (amended provisions of SB 177).

HB 2054, as amended by the House Committee on Elections, would have amended the Act to increase campaign contribution limits and eliminate limits on contributions to party committees. The provisions were not retained in the substitute bill.

SB 177 (Campaign Contributions)

The bill was introduced by the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs at the request of Senator Thompson.

Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

In the Senate Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by a representative of the Kriegshauser Ney Law Group, who stated contribution limits in Kansas have not been updated since 1990, and the bill would increase contribution limits and help ensure that the state does not have unconstitutionally low limits. The conferee stated adjusting the contribution limits based on inflation would also work to prevent contribution limits from becoming unconstitutionally low in the future. The conferee further discussed reasons to either limit contributions to party committees or limit contributions from party committees to candidates.

Written-only proponent testimony was provided by a member of the Shawnee City Council.

Written-only opponent testimony was provided by four private citizens.

No other testimony was provided.

The Senate Committee amended the bill to:

- Remove provisions providing for automatic increases to campaign contribution limits based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) [*Note: The Conference Committee did not retain this amendment.*];
- Increase contribution limits to party committees to \$50,000 per calendar year [*Note: The Conference Committee did not retain this amendment.*];
- Add a provision specifying no expenditure made by a party committee in support of a candidate, with or without the candidate's cooperation or consent, would constitute a contribution [*Note: The Conference Committee retained this amendment.*]; and
- Add a provision allowing candidates to receive contributions for primary and general elections before the primary election date and provide for acceptable accounting methods to do so. [*Note: The Conference Committee retained this amendment.*]

Senate Sub. for HB 2054 (Campaign Contributions)

Senate Committee of the Whole

Senate Sub. for HB 2054 was withdrawn from the Senate Calendar and rereferred to the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs.

Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

The Senate Committee amended the bill to:

- Restore and increase contribution limits made by party committees for each primary election in which two or more candidates are seeking the party nomination [*Note*: The Conference Committee retained this amendment.];
- Specify that contributions made to a state party committee, congressional district party committee, recognized political committee for the Senate, and recognized political committee for the House of Representatives would be limited to \$50,000 per calendar year [*Note*: The Conference Committee did not retain this amendment.]; and
- Decrease the contribution limit made to a county party committee from \$50,000 to \$20,000 per calendar year. [*Note*: The Conference Committee did not retain this amendment.]

Fiscal Information

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on SB 177, as introduced, the Governmental Ethics Commission (Commission) indicates enactment of the bill would require it to research and publish CPI information. The Commission notes that if it is required to publish information in the *Kansas Register*, as opposed to on its website, then enactment of the bill could increase expenditures for the agency; however, any effect is expected to be minimal and could be absorbed within existing resources.

The Office of the Secretary of State indicates enactment of the bill would not have a fiscal effect on the agency. Existing resources would be used to update training materials for local election offices. Any fiscal effect associated with the bill is not reflected in *The FY 2026 Governor's Budget Report*.

Elections; Campaign Finance Act; campaign contributions; party committees

ccrb_hb2054_01_3262025.odt