

Thank you for your attention,

Tobias Schlingensiepen

Testimony in Support of HB 2312:

Mr. Chairman, member of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak in favor of HB 2312.

HB 2312 would exempt political party treasurers from certain violations of the campaign finance act, if that treasurer serves on a volunteer basis.

Stepping up to serve as any officer for a party committee is a noble task that requires one to donate time, energy, and passion to a cause larger than oneself.

As treasurer, one assumes an additional legal responsibility for the finances and book-keeping of that party committee.

It is common for a voluntary treasurer to serve alongside full-time, paid staff members of that party committee whose primary task it is to carry out the day-to-day accounting functions, with the volunteer treasurer verifying the accuracy to the best of his or her ability.

Holding volunteer treasurers legally liable for the finances of a party committee, given that they are not full-time staff and often lack the kind of in-depth accounting experience a bonded treasurer, for example, could bring to the task, makes their sole liability problematic.

Should they verify financial accuracy to the best of their ability? Most certainly. Is it possible that they will miss things that only a full-time, experienced accountant would catch? Yes.

If there are accounting problems that need to be addressed, the party committee, rather than a volunteer treasurer, is in the best position to rectify whatever problems are discovered and to make whatever amends the Governmental Ethics Commission deems appropriate.

This bill in no way exempts volunteer treasurers from the consequences of intentionally attempting to create false financial reports, rather only from those errors that are of a non-nefarious nature.

Exorbitant fines that, under the current statute, may be assessed for financial reporting errors could have a chilling effect on the participation of those who would otherwise gladly volunteer their time as treasurers for their political party.

This bill seeks to place the ultimate responsibility for these kinds of errors with the party committee, which is the entity that has the most to gain from seeking to rectify whatever led to the errors in the first place.

Thank you, Chairman Proctor and members of the Committee, for allowing me to offer testimony today. I will gladly stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Rep. Tobias Schlingensiepen

HB 2312 ensures the financial liability for mistakes lies with the party committee rather than a volunteer who may have less in-depth knowledge of the activities of that committee.