

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE BILL NO. 600

BY STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

AN ACT

1 RELATING TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS; AMENDING TITLE 74, IDAHO CODE, BY THE ADDI-  
2 TION OF A NEW CHAPTER 6, TITLE 74, IDAHO CODE, TO PROVIDE FOR THE PUBLIC  
3 INTEGRITY IN ELECTIONS ACT, TO PROVIDE A SHORT TITLE, TO PROVIDE LEG-  
4 ISLATIVE INTENT, TO PROVIDE DEFINITIONS, TO PROHIBIT THE EXPENDITURE OF  
5 PUBLIC FUNDS, PROPERTY OR RESOURCES TO ADVOCATE FOR OR AGAINST CANDI-  
6 DATES OR CERTAIN BALLOT MEASURES, TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONS AND TO PROVIDE  
7 FOR REMEDIES FOR VIOLATIONS.  
8

9 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

10 SECTION 1. That Title 74, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended  
11 by the addition thereto of a NEW CHAPTER, to be known and designated as Chap-  
12 ter 6, Title 74, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:

13 CHAPTER 6

14 PUBLIC INTEGRITY IN ELECTIONS ACT

15 74-601. SHORT TITLE. This act shall be known and may be cited as the  
16 "Public Integrity in Elections Act."

17 74-602. LEGISLATIVE INTENT. The legislature finds that it is against  
18 the public policy of the state of Idaho for public funds, resources or prop-  
19 erty to be used to advocate for or against a candidate or ballot measure.

20 74-603. DEFINITIONS. As used in this chapter:

21 (1) (a) "Advocate" means to campaign for or against a candidate or the  
22 outcome of a ballot measure.

23 (b) "Advocate" does not mean providing factual information about a bal-  
24 lot measure and the public entity's reason for the ballot measure stated  
25 in a factually neutral manner.

26 (2) "Ballot measure" means constitutional amendments, bond measures or  
27 levy measures.

28 (3) "Candidate" means and includes every person for whom it is contem-  
29 plated or desired that votes be cast at any political convention, primary,  
30 general, local or special election and who either tacitly or expressly con-  
31 sents to be so considered.

32 (4) "Expenditure" means:

33 (a) A purchase, payment, donation, distribution, loan, advance, de-  
34 posit, gift of money, or anything of value; or

35 (b) A legally enforceable contract, promise or agreement to make any  
36 purchase, payment, donation, distribution, loan, advance, deposit,  
37 gift of money, or anything of value.

38 (5) "Property or resources" means goods, services, equipment, computer  
39 software and hardware, other items of intangible property, or facilities

1 provided to or for the benefit of a candidate, a candidate's personal cam-  
 2 paign committee, a political issues committee for political purposes, or  
 3 advocacy for or against a ballot measure or candidate. Public property or  
 4 resources that are available to the general public are exempt from this ex-  
 5 clusion.

6 (6) "Public entity" means the state, each state agency, county, munic-  
 7 ipality, school district or other taxing district or public corporation em-  
 8 powered to submit ballot measures to its electors.

9 (7) "Public funds" means any money received by a public entity from ap-  
 10 propriations, taxes, fees, interest or other returns on investment.

11 (8) "Public official" means an elected or appointed member of a public  
 12 entity who has:

13 (a) Authority to make or determine public policy;

14 (b) Supervisory authority over the personnel and affairs of a public  
 15 entity; or

16 (c) Authority to approve the expenditure of funds for the public en-  
 17 tity.

18 (9) "State agency" means each department, commission, board, council,  
 19 agency, institution, officer, corporation, fund, division, office, commit-  
 20 tee, authority or other administrative unit of the state.

21 74-604. PUBLIC FUNDS PROHIBITED. (1) Unless specifically required by  
 22 law, and except as provided in this chapter, neither a public entity nor its  
 23 employees shall make, nor shall a public official make or authorize, an ex-  
 24 penditure from public funds to advocate for or against a candidate or a bal-  
 25 lot measure.

26 (2) Neither a public entity nor any of its employees shall use, nor  
 27 shall a public official authorize or use, public property or resources to  
 28 advocate for or against a candidate or a ballot measure.

29 74-605. EXCLUSIONS. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit:

30 (1) A public official or employee from speaking, campaigning, con-  
 31 tributing personal money or otherwise exercising the public official's  
 32 or employee's individual first amendment rights for political purposes,  
 33 provided no public funds are used for expenditures supporting the public  
 34 official or employee in such activity;

35 (2) A public entity, public official or employee from the neutral en-  
 36 couragement of voters to vote;

37 (3) An elected official or employee from personally campaigning or ad-  
 38 vocating for or against a ballot measure, provided no public funds, property  
 39 or resources are used for supporting the elected official or employee in such  
 40 activity;

41 (4) A public entity from preparing and distributing to electors an ob-  
 42 jective statement explaining the purpose and effect of the ballot measure,  
 43 including in the case of bond or levy elections the cost per taxpayer or tax-  
 44 able value, or similar information based on reasonable estimates prepared in  
 45 good faith;

46 (5) The formulation and publication of statements regarding proposed  
 47 amendments to the state constitution, as authorized by section 67-453, Idaho  
 48 Code; or

1           (6) The publication of information described in sections 34-439,  
2 34-439A and 34-1406, Idaho Code, as applicable, or other provisions of law  
3 requiring notices and disclosures in connection with elections and ballot  
4 measures.

5           74-606. VIOLATIONS -- REMEDIES. (1) Any public official or employee  
6 who conducts or participates in an activity that violates the provisions of  
7 this chapter shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed two hundred  
8 fifty dollars (\$250).

9           (2) Any public official or employee who knowingly violates the provi-  
10 sions of this chapter shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed one  
11 thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500).

12           (3) Any public official or employee who knowingly violates any provi-  
13 sion of this chapter and who has previously admitted to committing or has  
14 been previously determined to have committed a violation pursuant to subsec-  
15 tion (2) of this section within the twelve (12) months preceding this subse-  
16 quent violation shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed two thou-  
17 sand five hundred dollars (\$2,500).

18           (4) The attorney general shall have the duty to enforce this chapter  
19 in relation to public agencies of state government, and the prosecuting at-  
20 torneys of the various counties shall have the duty to enforce this chapter  
21 in relation to local public agencies within their respective jurisdictions.  
22 In the event that there is reason to believe that a violation of the provi-  
23 sions of this act has been committed by members of a board of county commis-  
24 sioners or, for any other reason a county prosecuting attorney is deemed dis-  
25 qualified from proceeding to enforce this chapter, the prosecuting attorney  
26 or board of county commissioners shall seek to have a special prosecutor ap-  
27 pointed for that purpose, as provided in section 31-2603, Idaho Code.

28           (5) Nothing in this chapter shall prevent an individual who has vio-  
29 lated a provision of this chapter from also being prosecuted under the provi-  
30 sions of chapter 57, title 18, Idaho Code.