

HCS SB 1288 -- ETHICS

SPONSOR: Shields (Cooper, 120)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Elections by a vote of 8 to 1.

This substitute changes the laws regarding lobbying and campaign finance. In its main provisions, the substitute:

(1) Prohibits executive branch employees and members of their household from knowingly soliciting or accepting gifts from lobbyists. Certain exceptions are allowed, and there is no criminal penalty for a violation. Any gift received in violation of this provision must be returned and any erroneous ethics report must be corrected;

(2) Allows lobbyists to list total expenses, instead of itemizing expenditures by member, for any committee of the General Assembly. Currently, only expenses for standing committees are allowed to be listed as a single expense;

(3) Removes the reporting requirement that a lobbyist must provide a general description of the type of legislation he or she supported or opposed; and

(4) Allows any committee that has received a contribution that is nonallowable but cannot be returned to the original contributor to transfer the contribution to the General Revenue Fund or donate it to a charitable, fraternal, or civic organization.

The substitute contains an emergency clause regarding the return of nonallowable contributions.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2009, FY 2010, and FY 2011.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill makes the lobbyist reporting requirements for special and standing committees identical.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Cooper (120) for Senator Shields.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.