

HCS HB 794 -- LOCAL ELECTION AUTHORITIES

SPONSOR: Baker

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Commerce by a vote of 7 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 7 to 2.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 794.

This bill defines "election administration" to include any function directly related to the administration of elections, including voter registration, election security, ballot processing, and election official training. The definition also states that it does not include any post-election canvass, recount, contest, or audit processes.

The bill prohibits any government entity from soliciting, accepting, or using any funds or in-kind goods or services for election administration, unless the funds or in-kind goods or services are of de minimis value or provided by another government entity.

The bill states that the government entities must not be members of or participate in programs run by organizations that engage in election administration and receive foreign funding. Further, it prohibits any government entity or election officer from joining the membership of any entity, participating in any program, or purchasing services from any entity, unless the entity complies with certain certification requirements, as provided in the bill. The restrictions do not apply to memberships in professional organizations or memberships of individuals in a private capacity, unrelated to election administration.

If an election officer joins the membership of such an entity in his or her private capacity, the officer has a duty to disclose that information. The information required to be included in and the requirements for publication of the disclosure are provided in the bill.

A violation of this section will be a class B misdemeanor that is enforceable only if a government entity knowingly accepts foreign-influenced funds for election administration.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the purpose of the bill is not to have private organizations provide funding to influence local elections. The bill seeks to close loopholes in the law.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Baker; Heritage Action for America; Arnie Dienoff.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.