



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 502

February Session, 2026

Substitute Senate Bill No. 465

Senate, April 8, 2026

The Committee on Government Administration and Elections reported through SEN. FLEXER of the 29th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING EXPLORATORY COMMITTEES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (c) of section 9-604 of the general statutes is
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January*
3 *1, 2027*):

4 (c) (1) The chairman of a political committee formed to support a
5 single candidate for public office shall, not later than seven days after
6 filing a statement of organization with the proper authority under
7 section 9-603, send the candidate a notice, by certified mail, of such
8 filing. If a candidate [(1)] (A) does not, within fourteen days after
9 receiving such notice, disavow such committee, in writing, to the proper
10 authority under section 9-603, or [(2)] (B) disavows such committee
11 within such period, but, at any time before such disavowal, accepts
12 funds from the committee for his campaign, such committee shall be
13 deemed to have been authorized by such candidate and shall constitute
14 a candidate committee for the purposes of this chapter. No candidate

15 shall establish, agree to or assist in establishing, or give his consent or
16 authorization to establishing a committee other than a single candidate
17 committee to promote his candidacy for any public office, except that a
18 candidate may establish an exploratory committee in accordance with
19 the provisions of subdivision (2) of this subsection. [The candidate]

20 (2) A candidate establishing an exploratory committee shall
21 designate on the statement of organization for [the] such exploratory
22 committee the type of office to which the candidate is determining
23 whether to seek nomination or election, as follows: (A) The General
24 Assembly, (B) a state office, or (C) any other public office. [The candidate
25 may also certify on the statement of organization that the candidate will
26 not be a candidate for the office of state representative] An exploratory
27 committee shall not accept contributions in excess of five thousand
28 dollars.

29 (3) Not later than fifteen days after a public declaration by the
30 candidate of the candidate's intention to seek nomination or election to
31 a particular public office, including any statement by such candidate
32 that such candidate is determining whether to seek nomination or
33 election to such particular public office, the candidate shall form a single
34 candidate committee, except that in the case of a candidate establishing
35 an exploratory committee for purposes including aiding or promoting
36 the candidate's candidacy for nomination or election to the General
37 Assembly or a state office, the candidate shall form a single candidate
38 committee not later than fifteen days after the date that the treasurer of
39 such exploratory committee is required to file a notice of intent to
40 dissolve [the] such exploratory committee under subsection (f) of
41 section 9-608, as amended by this act. In no case shall an exploratory
42 committee be established for longer than thirty days. As used in this
43 subsection, "state office" has the same meaning as provided in
44 subsection (e) of section 9-610.

45 Sec. 2. Subsection (f) of section 9-608 of the general statutes is repealed
46 and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2027*):

47 (f) If an exploratory committee has been established by a candidate

48 pursuant to subsection (c) of section 9-604, as amended by this act, the
49 treasurer of the exploratory committee shall file a notice of intent to
50 dissolve [it] such exploratory committee with the appropriate authority
51 not later than fifteen days after the candidate's public declaration of
52 intent to seek nomination or election to a particular public office, except
53 that in the case of an exploratory committee established by a candidate
54 for purposes that include aiding or promoting the candidate's candidacy
55 for nomination or election to the General Assembly or a state office, the
56 treasurer of the exploratory committee shall file such notice of intent to
57 dissolve [the] such exploratory committee not later than fifteen days
58 after the earlier of: (1) The candidate's public declaration of intent to seek
59 nomination or election to a particular public office, (2) the candidate's
60 endorsement at a convention, caucus or town committee meeting, or (3)
61 the candidate's filing of a candidacy for nomination under section 9-400
62 or 9-405. For the purposes of this subsection, a candidate's public
63 declaration of intent to seek nomination or election to a particular public
64 office includes any statement by such candidate that such candidate is
65 determining whether to seek nomination or election to such particular
66 public office. The treasurer shall also file a statement identifying all
67 contributions received or expenditures made by the exploratory
68 committee since the previous statement and the balance on hand or
69 deficit, as the case may be. In the event of a surplus, the treasurer shall,
70 not later than the filing of the statement, distribute the surplus to the
71 candidate committee established pursuant to [said] section 9-604, as
72 amended by this act, except that (A) in the case of a surplus of an
73 exploratory committee established by a candidate who intends to be a
74 participating candidate, as defined in section 9-703, in the Citizens'
75 Election Program, the treasurer may distribute to the candidate
76 committee only that portion of such surplus that is attributable to
77 contributions that meet the criteria for qualifying contributions for the
78 candidate committee under section 9-704 and shall distribute the
79 remainder of such surplus to the Citizens' Election Fund established in
80 section 9-701, and (B) in the case of a surplus of an exploratory
81 committee established for nomination or election to an office other than
82 the General Assembly or a state office (i) the treasurer may only

83 distribute to the candidate committee for nomination or election to the
84 General Assembly or state office of such candidate that portion of such
85 surplus which is in excess of the total contributions which the
86 exploratory committee received from lobbyists or political committees
87 established by lobbyists, during any period in which the prohibitions in
88 subsection (e) of section 9-610 apply, and (ii) any remaining amount
89 shall be returned to all such lobbyists and political committees
90 established by or on behalf of lobbyists, on a prorated basis of
91 contribution, or distributed to any charitable organization which is a
92 tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue
93 Code of 1986, or any subsequent corresponding internal revenue code
94 of the United States, as from time to time amended. If the candidate
95 decides not to seek nomination or election to any office, the treasurer
96 shall, within fifteen days after such decision, comply with the provisions
97 of this subsection and distribute any surplus in the manner provided by
98 this section for political committees other than those formed for ongoing
99 political activities, except that if the surplus is from an exploratory
100 committee established by the State Treasurer, any portion of the surplus
101 that is received from a principal of an investment services firm or a
102 political committee established by such firm shall be returned to such
103 principal or committee on a prorated basis of contribution. In the event
104 of a deficit, the treasurer shall file a statement thirty days after the
105 decision or declaration with the proper authority and, thereafter, on the
106 seventh day of each month following if on the last day of the previous
107 month there was an increase or decrease in such deficit in excess of five
108 hundred dollars from that reported on the last statement filed. The
109 treasurer shall file supplemental statements until the deficit is
110 eliminated. If the exploratory committee does not have a surplus or
111 deficit, the statement filed after the candidate's declaration or decision
112 shall be the last required statement. [If a candidate certifies on the
113 statement of organization for the exploratory committee pursuant to
114 subsection (c) of section 9-604 that the candidate will not be a candidate
115 for the office of state representative and subsequently establishes a
116 candidate committee for the office of state representative, the treasurer
117 of the candidate committee shall pay to the State Treasurer, for deposit

118 in the General Fund, an amount equal to the portion of any contribution
119 received by said exploratory committee that exceeded two hundred fifty
120 dollars.] As used in this subsection, "principal of an investment services
121 firm" has the meaning set forth in subsection (e) of section 9-612 and
122 "state office" has the same meaning set forth in subsection (e) of section
123 9-610.

124 Sec. 3. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 9-611 of the general statutes
125 are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
126 *January 1, 2027*):

127 (a) No individual shall make a contribution or contributions to, for
128 the benefit of, or pursuant to the authorization or request of, a candidate
129 or a committee supporting or opposing any candidate's campaign for
130 nomination at a primary, or any candidate's campaign for election, to
131 the office of (1) Governor, in excess of three thousand five hundred
132 dollars; (2) Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the State, Treasurer,
133 Comptroller or Attorney General, in excess of two thousand dollars; (3)
134 chief executive officer of a town, city or borough, in excess of one
135 thousand dollars; (4) state senator or probate judge, in excess of one
136 thousand dollars; or (5) state representative or any other office of a
137 municipality not previously included in this subsection, in excess of two
138 hundred fifty dollars. The limits imposed by this subsection shall be
139 applied separately to primaries and elections.

140 (b) (1) No individual shall make a contribution or contributions to, or
141 for the benefit of, an exploratory committee, in excess of [three hundred
142 seventy-five dollars, if the candidate establishing the exploratory
143 committee certifies on the statement of organization for the exploratory
144 committee pursuant to subsection (c) of section 9-604 that the candidate
145 will not be a candidate for the office of state representative. No
146 individual shall make a contribution or contributions to, or for the
147 benefit of, any exploratory committee, in excess of two hundred fifty
148 dollars, if the candidate establishing the exploratory committee does not
149 so certify] two hundred fifty dollars.

150 (2) No individual shall make a contribution or contributions to, or for

151 the benefit of, a political committee formed by a slate of candidates in a
152 primary for the office of justice of the peace, in excess of two hundred
153 fifty dollars.

154 Sec. 4. Subsection (e) of section 9-613 of the general statutes is
155 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January*
156 *1, 2027*):

157 (e) No political committee organized by a business entity shall make
158 a contribution or contributions to (1) a state central committee of a
159 political party, in excess of seven thousand five hundred dollars in any
160 calendar year, (2) a town committee of any political party, in excess of
161 one thousand five hundred dollars in any calendar year, (3) an
162 exploratory committee in excess of [three hundred seventy-five] two
163 hundred fifty dollars, or (4) any other kind of political committee, in
164 excess of two thousand dollars in any calendar year.

165 Sec. 5. Subsection (b) of section 9-615 of the general statutes is
166 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January*
167 *1, 2027*):

168 (b) No such committee shall make a contribution or contributions to,
169 or for the benefit of, an exploratory committee, in excess of [three
170 hundred seventy-five] two hundred fifty dollars. Any such committee
171 may make unlimited contributions to a political committee formed
172 solely to aid or promote the success or defeat of a referendum question.

173 Sec. 6. Subsections (b) and (c) of section 9-617 of the general statutes
174 are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
175 *January 1, 2027*):

176 (b) (1) No state central committee shall make a contribution or
177 contributions to, for the benefit of, or pursuant to the authorization or
178 request of, a candidate or a committee supporting or opposing any
179 candidate's campaign for nomination at a primary, or any candidate's
180 campaign for election, to the office of: (A) Governor, in excess of fifty
181 thousand dollars; (B) Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the State,

182 Treasurer, Comptroller or Attorney General, in excess of thirty-five
183 thousand dollars; (C) state senator, probate judge or chief executive
184 officer of a town, city or borough, in excess of ten thousand dollars; (D)
185 state representative, in excess of five thousand dollars; or (E) any other
186 office of a municipality not previously included in this subsection, in
187 excess of five thousand dollars. The limits imposed by this subdivision
188 shall apply separately to primaries and elections.

189 (2) No state central committee shall make a contribution or
190 contributions in any one calendar year to, or for the benefit of (A) a
191 legislative caucus committee or legislative leadership committee, in
192 excess of ten thousand dollars, or (B) any other political committee,
193 other than an exploratory committee or a committee formed solely to
194 aid or promote the success or defeat of a referendum question, in excess
195 of two thousand five hundred dollars. No state central committee shall
196 make contributions in excess of [three hundred seventy-five] two
197 hundred fifty dollars to an exploratory committee.

198 (c) (1) No town committee shall make a contribution or contributions
199 to, for the benefit of, or pursuant to the authorization or request of, a
200 candidate or a committee supporting or opposing any candidate's
201 campaign for nomination at a primary, or any candidate's campaign for
202 election, to the office of: (A) Governor, in excess of seven thousand five
203 hundred dollars; (B) Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the State,
204 Treasurer, Comptroller or Attorney General, in excess of five thousand
205 dollars; (C) state senator, in excess of five thousand dollars; (D) state
206 representative, probate judge or chief executive officer of a town, city or
207 borough, in excess of three thousand dollars; or (E) any other office of a
208 municipality not previously included in this subsection, in excess of one
209 thousand five hundred dollars. The limits imposed by this subdivision
210 shall apply separately to primaries and elections.

211 (2) No town committee shall make a contribution or contributions in
212 any one calendar year to, or for the benefit of (A) a legislative caucus
213 committee or legislative leadership committee, in excess of two
214 thousand dollars, or (B) any other political committee, other than an

215 exploratory committee or a committee formed solely to aid or promote
216 the success or defeat of a referendum question, in excess of one
217 thousand five hundred dollars. No town committee shall make
218 contributions in excess of [three hundred seventy-five] two hundred
219 fifty dollars to an exploratory committee.

220 Sec. 7. Subsection (a) of section 9-618 of the general statutes is
221 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January*
222 *1, 2027*):

223 (a) A political committee organized for ongoing political activities
224 may make unlimited contributions to, or for the benefit of, any national
225 committee of a political party; or a committee of a candidate for federal
226 or out-of-state office. Except as provided in subdivision (3) of subsection
227 (d) of this section, no such political committee shall make a contribution
228 or contributions in excess of two thousand dollars to another political
229 committee in any calendar year. No political committee organized for
230 ongoing political activities shall make a contribution in excess of [three
231 hundred seventy-five] two hundred fifty dollars to an exploratory
232 committee. If such an ongoing committee is established by an
233 organization or a business entity, its contributions shall be subject to the
234 limits imposed by sections 9-613 to 9-615, inclusive, as amended by this
235 act. A political committee organized for ongoing political activities may
236 make contributions to a charitable organization which is a tax-exempt
237 organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as
238 from time to time amended, or make memorial contributions.

239 Sec. 8. Subsection (a) of section 9-619 of the general statutes is
240 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January*
241 *1, 2027*):

242 (a) No political committee established for a single primary or election
243 shall make contributions to a national committee, or a committee of a
244 candidate for federal or out-of-state office. If such a political committee
245 is established by an organization or a business entity, its contributions
246 shall also be subject to the limitations imposed by sections 9-613 to 9-
247 615, inclusive, as amended by this act. Except as provided in subdivision

248 (2) of subsection (d) of this section, no political committee formed for a
 249 single election or primary shall, with respect to such election or primary
 250 make a contribution or contributions in excess of two thousand dollars
 251 to another political committee, provided no such political committee
 252 shall make a contribution in excess of [three hundred seventy-five] two
 253 hundred fifty dollars to an exploratory committee.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	January 1, 2027	9-604(c)
Sec. 2	January 1, 2027	9-608(f)
Sec. 3	January 1, 2027	9-611(a) and (b)
Sec. 4	January 1, 2027	9-613(e)
Sec. 5	January 1, 2027	9-615(b)
Sec. 6	January 1, 2027	9-617(b) and (c)
Sec. 7	January 1, 2027	9-618(a)
Sec. 8	January 1, 2027	9-619(a)

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

The provisions of Section 1(c) were rewritten, for clarity; and in Section 2(f), references to "the committee" or "it" were changed to references to an exploratory committee, for clarity, and the sentence beginning "For the purposes of this subsection," was added for internal consistency.

GAE *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill makes a variety of changes to campaign finance laws, including: (1) adjusting contribution limits and establishing a \$5,000 cap on total contributions for exploratory committees; (2) establishing a time limit for operating as an exploratory committee; and (3) requiring a candidate committee if the candidate makes a public declaration of intent to seek a particular office. These changes result in no fiscal impact to the state or municipalities.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis**sSB 465*****AN ACT CONCERNING EXPLORATORY COMMITTEES.*****SUMMARY**

This bill makes several changes to exploratory committee operations under the state campaign finance laws. By law, candidates may use exploratory committees to aid or promote their candidacies for the General Assembly, state office, or other public office before they determine if they want to run for that office.

The bill generally reduces the maximum contribution that exploratory committees may be given from \$375 to \$250. It also limits the total amount of contributions an exploratory committee may accept to \$5,000. Separately, the bill caps the length of time an exploratory committee may exist to 30 days. By law, unchanged by the bill, an exploratory committee must be tied to a specific election and only one exploratory committee may be formed per election cycle.

Additionally, the bill changes one of current law's triggers that require candidates to dissolve their exploratory committees and establish candidate committees. Under current law, this requirement is triggered if the candidate makes a "public declaration" of their intent to seek nomination or election to a particular public office. The bill specifies this includes statements by a candidate that they are determining whether to seek nomination or election to a particular public office.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes, including changing references of a "candidate's declaration of intent" to a "candidate's public declaration of intent."

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027

CONTRIBUTION LIMITS FOR EXPLORATORY COMMITTEES

By law, unchanged by the bill, candidates forming an exploratory committee must file a statement of organization on whether they are considering running for legislative, statewide, or another type of office. Under current law:

1. a candidate may certify on that statement that he or she will not be a candidate for state representative;
2. individuals may give up to \$375 to candidates who make this certification, but only up to \$250 to candidates who do not; and
3. a candidate that makes this certification and subsequently establishes a candidate committee for the office of state representative must pay the state treasurer an amount equal to the contributions over \$250 per person that the exploratory committee received.

The bill eliminates the opportunity to make this statement and the higher contribution threshold and instead sets the individual contribution limit for all exploratory committees at \$250.

The bill also similarly reduces the maximum contribution, from \$375 to \$250, that exploratory committees may receive from (1) political committees organized by business entities and certain labor organizations, (2) state central committees, (3) town committees, (4) political committees organized for ongoing political activities, and (5) political committees established for a single primary or election.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/23/2026)