
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5546

AN ACT CONCERNING CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS, STATUTORILY RECOGNIZED INDIGENOUS TRIBES AND SECURITY FOR CANDIDATES, THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR CAMPAIGN STAFFS.

SUMMARY

The state's campaign finance laws establish permissible expenditures that candidate committees and exploratory committees may make to accomplish their lawful purposes (for example, staff compensation). The law applies broadly to candidates participating in the Citizens' Election Program (CEP), as well as to those who are privately funded and running in a state or municipal election. However, the law also requires the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) to adopt regulations on permissible expenditures specifically for participating CEP candidates who qualify for a grant.

This bill requires SEEC, on or after July 1, 2026, to amend the CEP regulations on permissible expenditures to allow for personal security services. After the regulations are amended, the bill authorizes participating candidates who qualify for a grant to spend grant funds for personal security services and child care (which the law already allows) until the results of the related election or primary are certified. The bill also allows privately funded candidates to pay for personal security services using campaign funds.

Relatedly, the bill removes a provision that prohibits candidates and their immediate family members from receiving compensation for providing child care services to a candidate's campaign.

The bill also exempts statutorily recognized Indian tribes in the state, as well as any entities or associations created by a tribe and its political subdivisions under tribal law, from certain definitions under a state campaign finance law (§ 1).

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the changes to the campaign finance definitions are effective on October 1, 2026.

PERSONAL SECURITY SERVICES

Under the bill, “personal security services” are services rendered to a candidate from individuals, other than on-duty law enforcement, to protect the candidate or the candidate’s family members or campaign staff and that are needed as a direct result of campaign activity that would not exist but for the candidate’s campaign.

The bill subjects these expenditures to the following conditions and limits:

1. aggregate personal security services expenditures may not exceed the amount of qualifying contributions (QCs) required to qualify for a CEP grant (for example, in 2026, \$20,100 for candidates for state senator and \$6,700 for candidates for state representative) and
2. any compensation for personal security services must be reasonable and customary for the services rendered.

By law, participating CEP candidates may give their campaign a limited amount of personal funds (for example, \$2,000 for a state senator candidate and \$1,000 for a state representative candidate). The bill exempts personal security services expenditures made directly from a candidate’s personal funds from these limits, as long as the candidate does not seek reimbursement from his or her candidate committee. The exemption applies once SEEC amends the CEP regulations as required by the bill.

CONTRACTOR DEFINITION

The bill exempts statutorily recognized indigenous tribes in the state, as well as any entities or associations created by a tribe and its political subdivisions under tribal law, from being considered a “state contractor,” “prospective state contractor,” or “subcontractor” under

the state campaign finance law that generally (1) prohibits these contractors from making contributions to statewide and legislative candidates for public office and (2) restricts these candidates from knowingly, willfully, or intentionally accepting contributions from these contractors (see BACKGROUND). Existing law also generally exempts (1) municipalities or other political subdivisions of the state, (2) executive or legislative branch employees, and (3) quasi-public employees.

State law statutorily recognizes the Schaghticoke, the Paucatuck Eastern Pequot, the Mashantucket Pequot, the Mohegan, and the Golden Hill Paugussett tribes.

BACKGROUND

Campaign Finance Prohibitions Regarding Contractors

State law generally bans state contractors, prospective state contractors, pre-qualified contractors, subcontractors, and their principals from making contributions to or on behalf of the following recipients: (1) exploratory or candidate committees for statewide or legislative candidates, (2) political committees authorized to make contributions to or spend on behalf of candidates for statewide or legislative office, or (3) party committees.

It also prohibits contractors from soliciting contributions for these committees from their employees, subcontractors, or subcontractors' principals. The prohibitions are branch-specific (for example, a state contractor contracted with the General Assembly may not engage in these prohibited activities for legislative contests).

Relatedly, constitutional officers, legislators, candidates for these offices, and their agents generally may not knowingly, willfully, or intentionally solicit contributions from a prohibited entity for any exploratory, candidate, political, or party committee.

Related Bill

SB 492, reported favorably by the Government Administration and Elections Committee, among other things, contains identical provisions

about allowable personal security expenditures.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 15 Nay 3 (03/20/2026)