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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sSB 1533**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING CHANGES TO THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM.***

#### **SUMMARY**

The Citizens' Election Program (CEP) is the state's voluntary public campaign financing system, available to candidates for legislative and statewide office. This bill makes several changes to the CEP, including (1) changing when certain inflationary adjustments must be made, (2) modifying the procedures for gubernatorial convention campaign grants, (3) changing when certain grant restrictions take effect, and (4) amending the definition of "organization expenditure."

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon passage, except that provisions changing the timeline for certain CEP adjustments are effective July 1, 2025, and provisions on when a convention campaign grant may be applied for and when CEP grant restrictions take effect are effective January 1, 2028.

#### **§ 2 — CPI ADJUSTMENTS FOR CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM**

The CEP is the state's voluntary public campaign financing system, available to candidates for legislative and statewide office. By law, candidates qualify for the CEP by raising at least an aggregate amount of funds through qualifying contributions (QCs) from individual donors. The State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) must adjust the aggregate and QC amounts every two years for legislative office candidates and every four years for statewide office candidates based on the change in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

Beginning with the 2028 election cycle, the bill shifts the timing of these adjustments from January of an election year to January of the prior year. For the 2026 election cycle, it also authorizes SEEC to make

an early inflationary adjustment to these amounts by July 3, 2025, based on the CPI-U, as published by the U.S. Department of Labor, during the period beginning on January 1, 2017, and ending on December 31, 2024.

By law, the statutory aggregate contribution amounts and QC amounts are set based on the elected office. The statutory aggregate amounts are \$250,000 for the governor, \$75,000 for the lieutenant governor or other statewide office, \$15,000 for a state senator, and \$5,000 for a state representative. The maximum QC amount under state law is \$250.

### **§ 3 — INELIGIBILITY FOR CEP GRANTS**

Once a candidate files an affidavit to abide by the CEP's requirements, current law makes the candidate ineligible for a CEP grant if he or she changes status as a major party, minor party, or petitioning party candidate or becomes a candidate of a different party. The bill shifts when this prohibition begins from the affidavit's filing to the CEP grant application's filing (which is generally after the candidate has met his or her fundraising requirement and qualified for ballot access, unlike when the affidavit has been filed).

### **§§ 3 & 4 — GUBERNATORIAL CONVENTION CAMPAIGN GRANT**

Under existing law, a major party gubernatorial candidate who participates in the CEP may apply for and receive a "convention campaign grant" before the party's nominating convention. The law allows candidates to apply for this grant at any time after filing the affidavit of intent to participate in, and abide by, the CEP's spending limits and requires SEEC to approve or disapprove the application within 10 business days after receiving it. The bill specifies that a major party candidate for nomination to the office of governor in 2030 or after may apply for this grant beginning in the January preceding the election after filing the affidavit.

Additionally, under the bill, if a gubernatorial candidate is approved for a convention campaign grant, but the upcoming grant amount has not yet been determined through the CPI adjustment process described above, similar to existing law for other CEP grants, SEEC must approve

the initial grant amount the candidate is eligible for. Once the CPI adjustment has been made, SEEC must approve and pay the remaining portion of the candidate's grant.

Relatedly, any candidate committee that applies for a grant before July 3, 2025 (see above), may only be approved for the unadjusted amount.

## **§ 1 — ORGANIZATION EXPENDITURES**

By law, organization expenditures are made by legislative caucus, legislative leadership, or party committees to benefit candidates or their committees. They are not considered campaign contributions, but the law places restrictions and limits on those made to benefit legislative candidates participating in the CEP.

The bill modifies the definition of organizational expenditure to include a campaign event at which a candidate or candidates are present. (Prior law included this language until 2023.) Current law only defines this as an event with campaign materials but at which no contribution may be received, solicited, or bundled.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Related Bills***

SB 515 (File 478), favorably reported by the Government Oversight Committee, makes changes to the inflationary adjustment procedures for QCs.

SB 1405 (File 489), favorably reported by the Government Oversight Committee, makes changes to the inflationary adjustment procedures for QCs and amends the definition of "organization expenditure."

HB 7089 (File 512), favorably reported by the Government Oversight Committee, makes identical changes as this bill, among others.

sHB 7222, favorably reported by the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee, makes identical changes to this bill, among others.

sHB 7246, favorably reported by the GAE Committee, amends the definition of “organization expenditure.”

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 17    Nay 2    (03/26/2025)