
Senate Bill 307—Revises provisions relating to public officers and candidates for public office. (BDR 17-768)

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FOR
Senator Michael Roberson**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE
OPERATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

April 1, 2015

Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the Committee. For the record, I am Michael Roberson, State Senator representing Senate District No. 20. It is an honor to be here today to introduce Senate Bill 307, which addresses a number of important lobbying disclosure and campaign finance issues to promote more openness, transparency, and clarity in Nevada’s reporting requirements. I believe this bill is long overdue, as it finally provides consistency in language and form between the Nevada Lobbying Disclosure Act and Nevada’s Financial Disclosure Act. It gives much-needed guidance on how to report matters such as travel expenses and costs associated with educational or informational meetings. While the bill may seem a bit lengthy, a number of the sections are housekeeping in nature to change simple terminology or replicate provisions between the two Acts.

If I may, Madam Chair, I would like to explain the major provisions of the bill:

- First, Senate Bill 307 amends the Lobbying Disclosure Act in Chapter 218H of the *Nevada Revised Statutes* by amending the definition of “expenditure”

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to clarify that an expenditure can be “anything of value provided for an educational or informational meeting, event or trip.” The definition removes references to “entertainment” and instead makes such activity specific to “the cost of a party, meal, function or other social event to which every legislator is invited.”

- The definition of “gift” is also clarified to *not* include “anything of value provided for an educational or informational meeting, event or trip” or “the cost of a party, meal, function or other social event to which every legislator is invited.” Under the bill, the existing gift exclusion also now includes anything of value received from a domestic partner as defined in Section 3 of the bill.
- To provide consistency in the law, this definition of gift found in Nevada’s lobbying laws is included as Section 19 of the bill for Nevada’s Financial Disclosure Act. This should help eliminate confusion across the board and requires all us to work under the same definition.
- Also, I might add, the new definition of “educational or informational meeting, event or trip” is the same in both Acts as they apply to legislators, public officers, and candidates.
- In terms of reporting regarding these educational and informational meetings, S.B. 307 clarifies in the Lobbyist Disclosure Act that lobbyists must disclose expenditures made for educational or informational meetings, events, or trips provided to State legislators. Moreover, and again to

provide consistency, public officers and candidates must disclose on their financial disclosure statements any educational or informational meeting, event, or trip that have been provided by persons having a substantial interest in legislative, administrative or political action of the public officer or the candidate. No longer will the public be kept “in the dark” regarding sponsored “fact finding” trips we often hear about in the news. These trips must be reported by lobbyists or disclosed by public officers and candidates on their financial disclosure statements.

- The definitional changes set forth in S.B. 307 comport with the changes proposed in Section of 11 of the bill, which remove the categorical reporting of expenditures made by a registered lobbyist in favor of the reporting based on regulations adopted by the Legislative Commission. These regulations already categorize reportable expenditures for entertainment, group events, gifts, loans, and other expenditures.
- Senate Bill 307 also removes the \$100 threshold on the prohibition of lobbyists giving or receiving gifts and instead provides that a lobbyist shall not “knowingly or willfully” give *any gift* to a member of the Legislative Branch; nor shall a member of the Legislative Branch accept *any gift* from a lobbyist. The bill clarifies that such prohibition applies “whether or not the Legislature is in a regular or special session.”
- Section 22 of S.B. 307 further streamlines the filing of financial disclosure statements for each public officer or candidates which, as you know, can already be filed electronically. Section 22 clarifies that the Secretary of

State must provide access through a secure Internet website for the purpose of filing these statements electronically. Sections 25 and 26 of the bill make housekeeping changes to comport with this requirement.

- The measure also specifies that a financial disclosure statement is deemed to be filed on the date filed if such filing occurs no later than 11:59 p.m. on that date.
- The bill expands the definition of candidate for the purposes of Chapter 281 of the NRS to also mean any person “who seeks to be elected to a public office” and clarifies that the term does not include a candidate for judicial office who is subject to the requirements of the *Nevada Code of Judicial Conduct*. Several sections of the bill jointly refer to the terms “public officer” and “candidate” since financial disclosure reporting is required for both.
- Finally, Senate Bill 307 makes a few changes to Chapter 294A as they relate to the timing of filing campaign contribution and expenses reports both during an election year and during nonelection years. To provide clarity, the terms “election year” and “nonelection year” are defined, respectively, to mean the entire calendar year an election is held and the calendar year when an election is not held.
- The measure provides that the required nonelection contribution and expenses reports must be filed 15 days after the end of that nonelection

year and clarifies that the reporting time period covers the entire year. This timeline also applies to the disposition of unspent contributions report.

- For election year reporting, the measure removes the sometimes-confusing language that requires four reporting times during the election year and, instead, requires a monthly contribution and expenses report throughout the election year to be filed 15 days after the end of each month.
- Madam Chair and members of the Committee, I know these remarks were a bit lengthy, but S.B. 307 has many critical components and I wanted to make sure you understand the many provisions of this important bill.

[SENATOR ROBERSON—Feel free to add further comments of a personal nature supporting the passage of S.B. 307]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thank you for your consideration and support of S.B. 307. I believe there are others here today who will also be testifying in support of this important measure.

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