



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR EDWARD J. KENNEDY
First Middlesex District

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May 15, 2019

The Honorable Barry R. Finegold, Senate Chair
The Honorable John J. Lawn Junior, House Chair
The Joint Committee on Election Laws
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Finegold and Chairman Lawn,

As someone who has disclosed campaign finance activity through the depository system and non-depository system within the last two years alone, I am writing to express my support for **Senate Bill 399, *An Act enhancing disclosure of campaign finance activity by expanding the depository reporting system to include legislative candidates.*** This legislation would transition legislative campaign accounts into the depository system, representing an important step towards enhanced transparency in campaign finance in Massachusetts.

The non-depository system through which legislative candidates currently disclose financial activity is both inefficient and prone to producing discrepancies in reported data. Because the system requires candidates to self-report receipts and expenditures, it is common for reported balances to not entirely reconcile with their actual bank balance, even when candidates dutifully attempt to accurately report their financial activity. An additional detriment of the system is that it requires candidates to file reports just two to three times per year, limiting the extent to which the public can monitor the financial activity of candidates.

The depository system allows for financial institutions to act as a third-party reporting agency and disclose deposits and expenditures on a campaign account directly to OCPF, adding a layer of verification to campaign finance data that is available to the public. This system, already in use by candidates for statewide office, candidates for council and mayor in larger communities, and by committees falling under several other categories, has proven effective in limiting discrepancies in reported data that are common in the non-depository system. Transitioning accounts to this system will enhance transparency in state legislative elections by increasing the frequency of disclosures to twice per month and improving the accuracy of information associated with credit card contributions, among a host of additional advantages.

While this legislation would create a convenience for legislative candidates by making their accounting obligations less burdensome, it would also substantially benefit the public by ensuring that transparency in the financial disclosure process remains a hallmark of elections in Massachusetts at all levels. For this reason, I encourage the Committee to join me in supporting the passage of this important legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (617) 722-1630.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E J Kennedy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Edward J. Kennedy
State Senator
First Middlesex District