

Special Report

from
State Representative

Phillip Pinion

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ETHICS LEGISLATION CLEARS HOUSE

Members of the Tennessee House joined together this week to pass strict new Ethics Legislation. From the beginning of this session of the 104th General Assembly, the House has identified several pieces of legislation that we feel are important to ethical operations of your government. Together, we have sought to propose and support sound principles for accountable operation.

House Bill 1 was the first piece of legislation filed this year. This bill prohibits all legislative and executive branch officials from having consulting contracts with persons or businesses currently doing business with the State of Tennessee. Further, all legislative staff must disclose any such contracts as well.

This initiative to require accountability through prohibition of legislative consulting contracts by Tennessee's decision makers was passed on Thursday. Simply put, this legislation will prohibit members of the General Assembly, Constitutional Officers, and Executive Staff from having any consulting contracts held with companies currently doing business with the state.

Also passed this week is legislation that will place a limit on the amount of funds that can be donated to Political Action Committees (PACs) and Political Parties. Already in statute are laws regulating the amounts that can be given to a candidate, but there are no reasonable safeguards placed on donations to PACs or Parties. Under this bill, the limit for contributions would be \$10,000 for PACs and \$50,000 for Parties per individual per calendar year.

The Election Reform Legislation seeks to close large loopholes in current law that permit unlimited contributions from wealthy individuals. No one person should have more influence over the legislative process than anyone other person simply because of their checkbook balance.

These common-sense proposals will close an often-used loophole for funneling money to select candidates and will encourage fair, positive campaigning. Both HB 1090 and HB 1098 were approved during Monday's session.

These bills are sound Ethics Reforms and the people of Tennessee deserve for them to be enacted.

Accountable government is effective, efficient and responsive government. It addresses the changing needs of the state and its citizens in an efficient, appropriate and equitable manner. It demonstrates sound planning and fiscal management. It encourages its citizens to be informed participants in civic affairs and to become actively involved in the governing process. And it is one of the most important responsibilities of our elected officials because virtually all other programs and operations of government depend on an efficient system.

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