
**State Government Operations &
Accountability Committee**

HB 1131

Brief Description: Regulating mail to constituents.

Sponsors: Representatives Nixon, Haigh and Shabro.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows campaign year legislative mailings via electronic mail beginning December 1 prior to a legislator's election and ending 45 days after the end of session.

Hearing Date: 1/28/05

Staff: James Allen (786-7114).

Background:

For the 12 month period preceding a general election in which a legislator is running for office, the legislator may not send to constituents, either by regular mail or electronic mail, a letter, newsletter, brochure, or other piece of literature. There are several exceptions to the rule:

- The legislator may send two newsletters during the 12 month period;
- The legislator may respond to constituent inquiries;
- The legislator may send a letter to a constituent who holds a government office having jurisdiction over the subject matter of the letter; and
- The legislator may send a letter to a constituent who has received an award or honor of extraordinary distinction of a type that is sufficiently infrequent to be noteworthy to a reasonable person, including the Nobel Prize, Pulitzer Prize, or other awards listed in the statute.

A violation of the statute constitutes use of the facilities of a public office for the purpose of assisting a campaign. The law gives the House and Senate the duty to limit expenditures per member for the total cost of the mailings.

Summary of Bill:

The prohibition against legislative mailings by electronic mail only applies for the period beginning 45 days after the regular session in the year a legislator is running for office and continuing through November 30 immediately following the general election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.