WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §3-8-1

§3-8-1. Provisions to regulate and control elections.

(a) The Legislature finds that:

(1) West Virginia's population is 1,808,344, ranking 37th among the fifty states.

(2) State Senate districts have a population of approximately one hundred six thousand three hundred seventy-three, and the average Delegate district has a population of approximately thirty-one thousand, one hundred seventy-eight. The size of these districts is substantially smaller than the United States Senatorial and Congressional Districts.

(3) When the relatively small size of the State's legislative and other voting districts is combined with the economics and typical uses of various forms of electioneering communication, history shows that non-broadcast media is and will continue to be a widely used means of making campaign related communications to target relevant audiences. Consequently, non-broadcast communications are prevalent during elections.

(4) Disclosure provisions are appropriate legislative weapons against the reality or appearance of improper influence stemming from the dependence of candidates on large campaign contributions, and the ceilings imposed accordingly serve the basic governmental interest in safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process without directly impinging upon the rights of individual citizens and candidates to engage in political debate and discussion.

(5) Disclosure of expenditures serve a substantial governmental interest in informing the electorate and preventing the corruption of the political process.

(6) Disclosure by persons and entities that make expenditures for communications that expressly advocate the election or defeat of clearly identified candidates, or perform its functional equivalent, is a reasonable and minimally restrictive method of furthering First Amendment values by public exposure of the state election system.

(7) Failing to regulate non-broadcast media messages would permit those desiring to influence elections to avoid the principles and policies that are embodied in existing state law.

(8) The regulation of the various types of non-broadcast media in addition to broadcast media, is tailored to meet the circumstances found in the State of West Virginia.

(9) Non-broadcast media such as newspapers, magazines or other periodicals have proven to be effective means of election communication in West Virginia. Broadcast, satellite and non-broadcast media have all been used to influence election outcomes.

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(10) Certain non-broadcast communications, such as newspaper inserts, can be more effective campaign methods than broadcast media because such communications can be targeted to registered voters or historical voters in the particular district. In contrast, broadcasted messages reach all of the general public, including person ineligible to vote in the district.

(11) Non-broadcast media communications in the final days of a campaign can be particularly damaging to the public's confidence in the election process because they reduce or make impossible an effective response.

(12) Identifying those funding non-broadcast media campaigns in the final days of a campaign may at least permit voters to evaluate the credibility of the message.

(13) In West Virginia, contributions up to the amounts specified in this article allow contributors to express their opinions, level of support and their affiliations.

(14) In West Virginia, campaign expenditures by entities and persons who are not candidates have been increasing. Public confidence is eroded when substantial amounts of such money, the source of which is hidden or disguised, is expended. This is particularly true during the final days of a campaign.

(15) In West Virginia, contributions to political organizations, defined in Section 527(e)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, substantially larger than the amounts permitted to be received by a candidate's political committee have been recorded and are considered by the legislature to be large contributions.

(16) Independent expenditures intended to influence candidates' campaigns in the state are increasingly utilizing non-broadcast media to support or defeat candidates.

(17) Identification of persons or entities funding political advertisements assists in enforcement of the contribution and expenditure limitations established by this article and simply informs voters of the actual identities of persons or entities advocating the election or defeat of candidates.

(18) Identification of persons or entities funding political advertisements allows voters to evaluate the credibility of the message contained in the advertisement.

(19) Disclosure of the identity of persons or entities funding political communications regarding candidates bolsters the right of listeners to be fully informed.

(b) Political campaign contributions, receipts and expenditures of money, advertising, influence and control of employees, and other economic, political and social control factors incident to primary, special and general elections shall be regulated and controlled by the provisions of this article and other applicable provisions of this chapter.

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