

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, No. 2020**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 23, 1997

The Senate Judiciary Committee reports favorably a Senate Committee Substitute for Senate, No. 2020.

The purpose of this bill is to change how campaign finance laws are enforced, to reduce contributions to legislative leadership committees and to provide the public with greater access to campaign finance reports filed by candidates and committees with the Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Specifically, the bill:

a) doubles all current civil fines provided for in "The New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act," the gubernatorial public financing statutes, the gubernatorial and legislative candidate financial disclosure statutes and the "Legislative Activities Disclosure Act of 1971";

b) establishes the amount of an illegal campaign contribution as the minimum amount of a penalty for any person who willfully and intentionally makes or accepts any such contribution in violation of current law;

c) reduces, from \$25,000 per year to \$10,000 per year, the amount of money and other thing of value that may be contributed to a legislative leadership committee by an individual, corporation, labor organization, candidate or committee;

d) provides an immediate appropriation of \$1.4 million to ELEC, with \$800,000 of that amount to enable the commission to purchase or otherwise acquire such computer technology and to hire such additional staff as it may deem necessary to enable the commission to provide the public with timely access by electronic means to the campaign finance reports that it receives from candidates and committees; and \$600,000 of that amount to help fund its enforcement responsibilities;

e) provides that beginning with the fiscal year beginning next after the enactment of the bill, there shall be appropriated annually to ELEC as part of its operational budget, a sum equal to not less than \$100,000 to provide the public with timely access by electronic means to the campaign finance reports that it receives from candidates and committees, or such moneys as the commission deems necessary for

it to maintain the level of computerization required for that purpose; and at the same time there shall be appropriated annually to ELEC as part of its operational budget, a sum equal to not less than \$600,000 to help fund its enforcement responsibilities;

f) provides that during each year in which there is an election for the office of Governor or member of the Legislature, the Attorney General shall provide ELEC with such assistance and resources as the commission shall deem necessary to enforce the requirements and prohibitions provided for in "The New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act," the gubernatorial public financing statutes, the gubernatorial and legislative candidate financial disclosure statutes and the "Legislative Activities Disclosure Act of 1971"; and

g) requires ELEC: 1) beginning with the general election to be held in November 1998, to provide computer software to all candidates for public office that enables a candidate to file all required reports with the commission by electronic means; 2) to require that candidates for public office in the general election to be held in November 1998, other than candidates for public office in a municipality, and thereafter candidates for nomination and election for the office of Governor, member of the Legislature and county office, shall file all required reports with the commission by electronic means; and 3) prior to the general election to be held in November 1998, to undertake a study and make recommendations regarding the feasibility of requiring political committees, continuing political committees, political party committees and legislative leadership committees to file all required reports with the commission by electronic means.