

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2005**

**SESSION LAW 2006-195
HOUSE BILL 1846**

AN ACT TO LOWER THE THRESHOLD FROM ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS TO FIFTY DOLLARS FOR ACCEPTING A POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION IN CASH; TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF BLANK PAYEE CHECKS IN CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS; TO REQUIRE THE REPORTING OF THE IDENTITY OF A CONTRIBUTOR WHO MAKES A CONTRIBUTION OF MORE THAN FIFTY DOLLARS; TO SPECIFY THE TIME PERIOD BY WHICH THE THRESHOLD FOR IDENTIFYING AN INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR'S IDENTITY IS MEASURED; TO ADD A PENALTY FOR ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CERTAIN NONLEGAL SOURCES; TO BAR PROSECUTION IF BEST EFFORTS ARE MADE TO ENSURE THAT A CONTRIBUTION IS FROM A LEGAL SOURCE; AND TO STRENGTHEN POLITICAL COMMITTEE TREASURER TRAINING.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 163-278.14(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) No entity shall ~~give, make,~~ and no candidate, committee or treasurer shall accept, any monetary contribution in excess of ~~one hundred fifty dollars (\$100.00)~~ (\$50.00) unless such contribution ~~be is~~ in the form of a check, draft, money order, credit card charge, debit, or other noncash method that can be subject to written verification. No contribution in the form of check, draft, money order, credit card charge, debits, or other noncash method may be made or accepted unless it contains a specific designation of the intended contributee chosen by the contributor. The State Board of Elections may prescribe guidelines as to the reporting and verification of any method of contribution payment allowed under this Article. For contributions by money order, the State Board shall prescribe methods to ensure an audit trail for every contribution so that the identity of the contributor can be determined. For a contribution made by credit card, the credit card account number of a contributor is not a public record."

SECTION 2. G.S. 163-278.20 is repealed.

SECTION 3. G.S. 163-278.19(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) It shall, however, be lawful for any corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company to communicate with its employees, stockholders or members and their families on any subject; to conduct nonpartisan registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns aimed at their employees, stockholders, or members and their families; or for officials and employees of any corporation, insurance company or business entity or the officials and members of any labor union or professional association to establish, administer, contribute to, and to receive and solicit contributions to a separate segregated fund to be utilized for political purposes, ~~except as provided in G.S. 163-278.20,~~ and those individuals shall be deemed to become and be a political committee as that term is defined in G.S. 163-278.6(14) or a referendum committee as defined in G.S. 163-278.6(18b); provided, however, that it shall be unlawful for any such fund to make a contribution or expenditure by utilizing contributions secured by physical force, job discrimination, financial reprisals or the threat of force, job discrimination or financial reprisals, or by dues, fees, or other moneys required as a condition of membership or employment or as a requirement with respect to any terms or conditions of employment, including, without limitation, hiring,

firing, transferring, promoting, demoting, or granting seniority or employment-related benefits of any kind, or by moneys obtained in any commercial transaction whatsoever."

SECTION 4. G.S. 163-278.8 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.8. Detailed accounts to be kept by political treasurers.

(a) The treasurer of each candidate, political committee, and referendum committee shall keep detailed accounts, current within not more than seven days after the date of receiving a contribution or making an expenditure, of all contributions received and all expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate, political committee, or referendum committee. The accounts shall include the information required by the State Board of Elections on its forms.

(b) Accounts kept by the treasurer of a candidate, political committee, or referendum committee or the accounts of a treasurer or political committee at any bank or other depository listed under G.S. 163-278.7(b)(7), may be inspected, before or after the election to which the accounts refer, by a member, designee, agent, attorney or employee of the Board who is making an investigation pursuant to G.S. 163-278.22.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2004-125, s. 5(a), effective July 20, 2004, and applicable to contributions made on or after January 1, 2003.

~~(d) A treasurer shall not be required to report the name of any individual who is a resident of this State who makes a total contribution of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or less but he shall instead report the fact that he has received a total contribution of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or less, the amount of the contribution, and the date of receipt. If a treasurer receives contributions of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or less, each at a single event, he may account for and report the total amount received at that event, the date and place of the event, the nature of the event, and the approximate number of people at the event. With respect to the proceeds of sale of services, campaign literature and materials, wearing apparel, tickets or admission prices to campaign events such as rallies or dinners, and the proceeds of sale of any campaign related services or goods, if the price or value received for any single service or goods exceeds one hundred dollars (\$100.00), the treasurer shall account for and report the name of the individual paying for such services or goods, the amount received, and the date of receipt, but if the price or value received for any single service or item of goods does not exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00), the treasurer may report only those services or goods rendered or sold at a value that does not exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00), the nature of the services or goods, the amount received in the aggregate for the services or goods, and the date of the receipt.~~

(e) All expenditures for media expenses shall be made by a verifiable form of payment. The State Board of Elections shall prescribe methods to ensure an audit trail for every expenditure so that the identity of each payee can be determined. All media expenditures in any amount shall be accounted for and reported individually and separately.

(f) All expenditures for nonmedia expenses (except postage) of more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) shall be made by a verifiable form of payment. The State Board of Elections shall prescribe methods to ensure an audit trail for every expenditure so that the identity of each payee can be determined. All expenditures for nonmedia expenses of fifty dollars (\$50.00) or less may be made by check or by cash payment. All nonmedia expenditures of more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) shall be accounted for and reported individually and separately, but expenditures of fifty dollars (\$50.00) or less may be accounted for and reported in an aggregated amount, but in that case the treasurer shall account for and report that he made expenditures of fifty dollars (\$50.00) or less each, the amounts, dates, and the purposes for which made. In the case of a nonmedia expenditure required to be accounted for individually and separately by this subsection, if the expenditure was to an individual, the report shall list the name and address of the individual.

(g) All proceeds from loans shall be recorded separately with a detailed analysis reflecting the amount of the loan, the source, the period, the rate of interest, and the security pledged, if any, and all makers and endorsers."

SECTION 5. G.S. 163-278.11 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.11. Contents of treasurer's statement of receipts and expenditures.

(a) Statements filed pursuant to provisions of this Article shall set forth the following:

- (1) Contributions. – Except as provided in subsection (a1) of this section, ~~A~~ a list of all contributions ~~required to be listed under G.S. 163-278.8~~ received by or on behalf of a candidate, political committee, or referendum committee. The statement shall list the name and complete mailing address of each contributor, the amount contributed, the principal occupation of the contributor, and the date such contribution was received. The total sum of all contributions to date shall be plainly exhibited. Forms for required reports shall be prescribed by the Board. As used in this section, "principal occupation of the contributor" means the contributor's:
 - a. Job title or profession; and
 - b. Employer's name or employer's specific field of business activity.

The State Board of Elections shall prepare a schedule of specific fields of business activity, adapting or modifying as it deems suitable the business activity classifications of the Internal Revenue Code or other relevant classification schedules. In reporting a contributor's specific field of business activity, the treasurer shall use the classification schedule prepared by the State Board.

- (2) Expenditures. – A list of all expenditures required under G.S. 163-278.8 made by or on behalf of a candidate, political committee, or referendum committee. The statement shall list the name and complete mailing address of each payee, the amount paid, the purpose, and the date such payment was made. The total sum of all expenditures to date shall be plainly exhibited. Forms for required reports shall be prescribed by the Board.
- (3) Loans. – Every candidate and treasurer shall attach to the campaign transmittal submitted with each report an addendum listing all proceeds derived from loans for funds used or to be used in this campaign. The addendum shall be in the form as prescribed by the State Board of Elections and shall list the amount of the loan, the source, the period, the rate of interest, and the security pledged, if any, and all makers and endorsers.

(a1) Threshold for Reporting Identity of Contributor. – A treasurer shall not be required to report the name, address, or principal occupation of any individual resident of the State who contributes fifty dollars (\$50.00) or less to the treasurer's committee during an election as defined in G.S. 163-278.13. The State Board of Elections shall provide on its reporting forms for the reporting of contributions below that threshold. On those reporting forms, the State Board may require date and amount of contributions below the threshold, but may treat differently for reporting purposes contributions below the threshold that are made in different modes and in different settings.

(b) Statements shall reflect anything of value paid for or contributed by any person or individual, both as a contribution and expenditure. A political party executive committee that makes an expenditure that benefits a candidate or group of candidates shall report the expenditure, including the date, amount, and purpose of the expenditure and the name of and office sought by the candidate or candidates on whose behalf the expenditure was made. A candidate who benefits from the expenditure shall report the expenditure or the proportionate share of the expenditure from which the candidate

benefitted as an in-kind contribution if the candidate or the candidate's committee has coordinated with the political party executive committee concerning the expenditure.

(c) Best Efforts. – When a treasurer shows that best efforts have been used to obtain, maintain, and submit the information required by this Article for the candidate or political committee, any report of that candidate or committee shall be considered in compliance with this ~~Article~~ Article and shall not be the basis for criminal prosecution or the imposition of civil penalties, other than forfeiture of a contribution improperly accepted under this Article. The State Board of Elections shall promulgate rules that specify what are "best efforts" for purposes of this Article, adapting as it deems suitable the provisions of 11 C.F.R. § 104.7. The rules shall include ~~the a~~ provision that if the treasurer, after complying with this Article and the rules, does not know the occupation of the contributor, it shall suffice for the treasurer to report "unable to obtain"."

SECTION 5.1. G.S. 163-278.9(g) reads as rewritten:

"(g) Any report filed under subsection (e) of this section must contain all the information required by ~~G.S. 163-278.8 or~~ G.S. 163-278.11, notwithstanding that the federal law may set a higher reporting threshold."

SECTION 5.2. G.S. 163-278.14(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) No individual, political committee, or other entity shall make any contribution ~~anonymously, except as provided in G.S. 163-278.8(d),~~ anonymously or in the name of another. No candidate, political committee, referendum committee, political party, or treasurer shall knowingly accept any contribution made by any individual or person in the name of another individual or person or made ~~anonymously except as provided in G.S. 163-278.8(d),~~ anonymously. If a candidate, political committee, referendum committee, political party, or treasurer receives anonymous contributions or contributions determined to have been made in the name of another, he shall pay the money over to the Board, by check, and all such moneys received by the Board shall be deposited in the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund of the State of North Carolina."

SECTION 6. G.S. 163-278.15 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.15. No acceptance of contributions made by corporations, foreign and ~~domestic~~ domestic, or other prohibited sources.

No candidate, political committee, political party, or treasurer shall accept any contribution made by any corporation, foreign or domestic, regardless of whether such corporation does business in the State of North ~~Carolina~~ Carolina, or made by any business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company. This section does not apply with regard to entities permitted to make contributions by G.S. 163-278.19(f)."

SECTION 7. G.S. 163-278.7 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.7. Appointment of political treasurers.

(a) Each candidate, political committee, and referendum committee shall appoint a treasurer and, under verification, report the name and address of the treasurer to the Board. A candidate may appoint himself or any other individual, including any relative except his spouse, as his treasurer, and, upon failure to file report designating a treasurer, the candidate shall be concluded to have appointed himself as treasurer and shall be required to personally fulfill the duties and responsibilities imposed upon the appointed treasurer and subject to the penalties and sanctions hereinafter provided.

(b) Each appointed treasurer shall file with the Board at the time required by G.S. 163-278.9(a)(1) a statement of organization that includes:

(1) The Name, Address and Purpose of the Candidate, Political Committee, or Referendum Committee. – When the political committee or referendum committee is created pursuant to G.S. 163-278.19(b), the name shall be or include the name of the corporation, insurance company, business entity, labor union or professional association whose officials, employees, or members established the committee. When the political committee or referendum committee is not created pursuant to G.S. 163-278.19(b),

the name shall be or include the economic interest, if identifiable, principally represented by the committee's organizers or intended to be advanced by use of the committee's receipts.

- (2) The names, addresses, and relationships of affiliated or connected candidates, political committees, referendum committees, political parties, or similar organizations;
- (3) The territorial area, scope, or jurisdiction of the candidate, political committee, or referendum committee;
- (4) The name, address, and position with the candidate or political committee of the custodian of books and accounts;
- (5) The name and party affiliation of the candidate(s) whom the committee is supporting or opposing, and the office(s) involved;
- (5a) The name of the referendum(s) which the referendum committee is supporting or opposing, and whether the committee is supporting or opposing the referendum;
- (6) The name of the political committee or political party being supported or opposed if the committee is supporting the ticket of a particular political or political party;
- (7) A listing of all banks, safety deposit boxes, or other depositories used, including the names and numbers of all accounts maintained and the numbers of all such safety deposit boxes used, provided that the Board shall keep any account number included in any report filed after March 1, 2003, and required by this Article confidential except as necessary to conduct an audit or investigation, except as required by a court of competent jurisdiction, or unless confidentiality is waived by the treasurer. Disclosure of an account number in violation of this subdivision shall not give rise to a civil cause of action. This limitation of liability does not apply to the disclosure of account numbers in violation of this subdivision as a result of gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing that would otherwise be actionable.
- (8) The name or names and address or addresses of any assistant treasurers appointed by the treasurer. Such assistant treasurers shall be authorized to act in the name of the ~~treasurer, candidate, political committee, or referendum committee who~~ and shall be fully responsible for any act or acts committed by ~~an~~ the assistant ~~treasurer, treasurer, and the~~ The treasurer shall be fully liable for any violation of this Article committed by any assistant treasurer; and
- (9) Any other information which might be requested by the Board that deals with the campaign organization of the candidate or referendum committee.

(c) Any change in information previously submitted in a statement of organization shall be reported to the Board within a 10-day period following the change.

(d) A candidate, political committee or referendum committee may remove his or its treasurer. In case of the death, resignation or removal of his or its treasurer before compliance with all obligations of a treasurer under this Article, such candidate, political committee or referendum committee shall appoint a successor within 10 days of the vacancy of such office, and certify the name and address of the successor in the manner provided in the case of an original appointment.

(e) Every treasurer of a referendum committee shall receive, prior to every election in which the referendum committee is involved, training from the State Board of Elections as to the duties of the office, including the requirements of G.S. 163-278.13(e1), provided that the treasurer may designate an employee or volunteer of the committee to receive the training.

(f) ~~The State Board of Elections shall provide training for every~~Every treasurer of a political committee, ~~prior to the election in which the political committee is involved, committee shall participate in training as to the duties of the office,office within three months of appointment and at least once every four years thereafter.~~ The State Board of Elections shall provide ~~each treasurer with a CD-ROM, DVD, videotape, or other electronic document containing the training as to the duties of the office,office in person, through and shall conduct regional seminars for in person training, seminars, and through interactive electronic means.~~ The treasurer may designate an assistant treasurer to participate in the training, if one is named under subdivision (b)(8) of this section. The treasurer may choose to participate in training prior to each election in which the political committee is involved. All such training shall be free of charge to the ~~treasurer, treasurer and assistant treasurer.~~"

SECTION 8. G.S. 163-278.9 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(k) All reports under this section must be filed by a treasurer or assistant treasurer who has completed all training as to the duties of the office required by G.S. 163-278.7(f)."

SECTION 9. Sections 1 through 6 of this act become effective January 1, 2007, and apply to all contributions made and accepted on and after that date. The repeal of G.S. 163-278.20 is not effective retroactively and shall not be deemed to render lawful or unlawful any action occurring before its effective date. Sections 7 and 8 of this act become effective October 1, 2006. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 19th day of July, 2006.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
President of the Senate

s/ James B. Black
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley
Governor

Approved 2:00 p.m. this 3rd day of August, 2006