

February 16, 2023  
Testimony to Kansas House Committee on Elections  
in **OPPOSITION** to HB 2391, a bill amending the governmental ethics commission act.  
Erin Gould, Citizen

Chairman Proctor, Members of the Committee;

I am an ordinary mother of three who resides in Roeland Park, Kansas. I have done my best to read and understand this bill.

Campaign finance rules exist to ensure both a measure of fairness and transparency. This bill aggressively works to undermine both of these things.

It is inappropriate to create a mechanism which legalizes an individual's ability to circumnavigate campaign contribution limits. Limits are established in order to ensure that everyone has equal access to campaigns and candidates. Legalizing the ability to give contributions in the name of another allows wealthy citizens a disproportionately 'loud' voice and is entirely contrary to the idea of fairness. Why would you support this measure unless you believe that it is right to allow wealthy citizens to have a greater 'voice'? Do you?

Similarly, I do not support this bill's efforts to allow candidates to give their campaign funds to PACs. Dollars given to candidates are given by citizens in good faith to elect that particular candidate, not to prop up candidates who do not represent that citizen and who are less popular and unable to raise funds on their own. It is even more egregious if this bill allows candidates to give money to issue-specific causes or PACs outside of Kansas. Kansans who wish to support candidates and causes outside of those which directly impact them can do so on their own. They should not have their money shuttled outside its intended purpose without their express knowledge and approval.

I am also troubled by this bill's efforts to undermine the composition of the commission on governmental standards and conduct. First, it appears to make it more partisan. I would warn you that while one party currently has a strangle-hold on Kansas, that might not always be the case. As our representatives, you should always strive for balance in party representation in all aspects of oversight to prevent the perception that the system is being rigged to support one particular party view. The day may come when the tables are turned and those in power now will regret their efforts to skew oversight to be more partisan.

Finally, while I am not a lawyer and do not fully understand all the legal ins and outs of campaign finance law, my takeaway is that this bill reduces Kansans' ability to have faith that our campaigns are ethical. Changing the statute of limitations to two years, for example, will make it much harder to successfully pursue fraudulent activities since (as we all know) research and investigation can take time. Of all the changes in this bill, this one strikes me the most as an effort to protect criminals. Any ethical person, any ethical campaign, any ethical candidate or legislator should welcome a long and thorough investigative process because they know no fault will be found. Any person who seeks to make it harder to investigate irregularities and harder to seek justice when crimes are committed lacks the good character and morals necessary to represent their fellow citizens.

I urge you to vote no on this bill.