

Senate Bill 528

By: Senators Williams of the 25th and Harbin of the 16th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 5 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
2 government transparency and campaign finance, so as to provide that the State Ethics  
3 Commission shall not accept or reject complaints made against candidates 60 days prior to  
4 an election; to provide that campaign and personal finance disclosure reports for local elected  
5 officials shall be filed with the commission instead of locally; to provide uniform reporting  
6 dates for campaigns for all levels of office; to remove registration requirements for  
7 individuals who contribute \$25,000.00 or less directly to candidates or campaign committees  
8 in a calendar year; to provide for registration of certain political action committees; to require  
9 certain political action committees to maintain bank accounts; to provide disclosure reporting  
10 requirements for certain political action committees; to revise and make more uniform  
11 reporting dates for personal financial disclosure statements for office holders and candidates;  
12 to revise provisions related to reporting income on personal financial disclosure statements  
13 for office holders and candidates; to provide that the commission shall not publicly release  
14 home address information in its possession; to revise lobbyist reporting requirements to make  
15 the reporting dates for such requirements more uniform; to increase the expenditure cap on  
16 lobbyists; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

S. B. 528

- 1 -

18

**SECTION 1.**

19 Chapter 5 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to government  
20 transparency and campaign finance, is amended by revising Code Section 21-5-7, relating  
21 to initiation of complaints, as follows:

22 "21-5-7.

23 (a) The commission shall not initiate any investigation or inquiry into any matter under its  
24 jurisdiction based upon the complaint of any person, including a staff attorney employed  
25 by the commission, unless that person or staff attorney shall produce the same in writing  
26 and verify the same under oath to the best information, knowledge, and belief of such  
27 person, the falsification of which shall be punishable as false swearing under Code  
28 Section 16-10-71.

29 (b) The person against whom any complaint is made shall be furnished by hand delivery  
30 or statutory overnight delivery or mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested, a copy  
31 of the complaint by the commission within two business days of the commission's receipt  
32 of such complaint and prior to any other public dissemination of such complaint.

33 (c) The commission shall not accept or reject a complaint made, nor issue a complaint on  
34 its own cognizance, against a candidate in the 60 days immediately prior to an election in  
35 which such candidate is seeking nomination for election or election."

36

**SECTION 2.**

37 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 21-5-34, relating to campaign  
38 disclosure reports, as follows:

39 "21-5-34.

40 (a)(1)(A) The candidate or the chairperson or treasurer of each campaign committee  
41 organized to bring about the nomination or election of a candidate for any office and  
42 the chairperson or treasurer of every campaign committee designed to bring about the  
43 recall of a public officer or to oppose the recall of a public officer or designed to bring

44 about the approval or rejection by the voters of any proposed constitutional amendment,  
45 state-wide proposed question, or state-wide referendum shall electronically sign and file  
46 with the commission the required campaign contribution disclosure reports; ~~provided,~~  
47 ~~however, that public offices listed in subparagraph (F) or (G) of paragraph (22) of Code~~  
48 ~~Section 21-5-3 shall be subject to signing and filing requirements as prescribed by~~  
49 ~~paragraph (3) or (4) of this subsection, and recalls for such offices shall be subject to~~  
50 ~~signing and filing requirements the same as required of candidates for such offices as~~  
51 ~~prescribed by paragraph (3) or (4) of this subsection.~~

52 (B) The chairperson or treasurer of each independent committee shall file the required  
53 disclosure reports with the commission.

54 (2)(A) Any campaign committee which accepts contributions or makes expenditures  
55 designed to bring about the approval or rejection by the voters of any proposed question  
56 which is to appear on the ballot in this state shall register with the commission and file  
57 campaign contribution disclosure reports as prescribed by this chapter ~~or, in the case~~  
58 ~~of any proposed question which is to appear on the ballot in a county or municipal~~  
59 ~~election, shall register and file campaign disclosure reports with the same officials as~~  
60 ~~prescribed by paragraph (3) or (4) of this subsection for candidates for county or~~  
61 ~~municipal offices; provided, however, that such reports shall only be required if such~~  
62 ~~campaign committee has received contributions which total more than \$500.00 or if~~  
63 ~~such campaign committee has made expenditures which total more than \$500.00. All~~  
64 ~~advertising pertaining to referendums shall identify the principal officer of such~~  
65 ~~campaign committee by listing or stating the name and title of the principal officer.~~

66 (B) If a campaign committee is required to file a report with the commission under  
67 subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, such report shall be electronically filed. Any such  
68 report shall be filed 15 days prior to the date of the election; and a final report shall be  
69 filed prior to December 31 of the election year.

70 ~~(3) A candidate for a public office listed in subparagraph (F) of paragraph (22) of Code~~  
71 ~~Section 21-5-3 or the chairperson or treasurer of such candidate's campaign committee~~  
72 ~~shall sign and file the required disclosure reports with the election superintendent in the~~  
73 ~~county of election. Upon receipt of any such report, the election superintendent shall~~  
74 ~~cause such report to be available for inspection and copying in accordance with Article~~  
75 ~~4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50. The election superintendent shall transmit a copy of each~~  
76 ~~such report to the commission, electronically by eFiling or eFax, not later than 30 days~~  
77 ~~after the end of the grace period. No fine, fee, or sanction, including but not limited to~~  
78 ~~identifying a candidate as having filed late or failed to file, shall be imposed by the~~  
79 ~~commission on a candidate for the failure of the election superintendent to timely~~  
80 ~~transmit a copy of such report. The commission is authorized to impose civil penalties~~  
81 ~~pursuant to subparagraph (b)(14)(C) of Code Section 21-5-6 against an election~~  
82 ~~superintendent who fails to properly transmit a copy of each such report, upon finding~~  
83 ~~that said superintendent willfully failed to comply with the provisions of this chapter.~~  
84 ~~(4) A candidate for a public office listed in subparagraph (G) of paragraph (22) of Code~~  
85 ~~Section 21-5-3 or the chairperson or treasurer of such candidate's campaign committee~~  
86 ~~shall sign and file the required disclosure reports with the municipal clerk in the~~  
87 ~~municipality of election or, if there is no clerk, with the chief executive officer of the~~  
88 ~~municipality; provided, however, that a municipality and a county may enter into an~~  
89 ~~agreement whereby such candidates, chairpersons, or treasurers shall file the required~~  
90 ~~disclosure reports with the county election superintendent instead. Upon receipt of any~~  
91 ~~such report, the municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the municipality, or county~~  
92 ~~election superintendent, as applicable, shall cause such report to be available for~~  
93 ~~inspection and copying in accordance with Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50. The~~  
94 ~~municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the municipality, or county election~~  
95 ~~superintendent, as applicable, shall transmit a copy of each such report to the~~  
96 ~~commission, electronically by eFiling or eFax, not later than 30 days after the end of the~~

97 ~~grace period. No fine, fee, or sanction, including but not limited to identifying a~~  
98 ~~candidate as having filed late or failed to file, shall be imposed by the commission on a~~  
99 ~~candidate for the failure of the municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the county, or~~  
100 ~~county election superintendent to timely transmit a copy of such report. The commission~~  
101 ~~is authorized to impose civil penalties pursuant to subparagraph (b)(14)(C) of Code~~  
102 ~~Section 21-5-6 against a municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the county, or county~~  
103 ~~election superintendent who fails to properly transmit a copy of each such report, upon~~  
104 ~~finding that said municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the county, or county election~~  
105 ~~superintendent willfully failed to comply with the provisions of this chapter.~~

106 (a.1)(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this Code section providing  
107 for signing and filing with the commission to the contrary, public offices listed in  
108 subparagraph (F) or (G) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3 shall be subject to the  
109 following signing and filing requirements until December 31, 2025:

110 (A) A candidate for a public office listed in subparagraph (F) of paragraph (22) of  
111 Code Section 21-5-3 or the chairperson or treasurer of such candidate's campaign  
112 committee shall sign and file the required disclosure reports with the election  
113 superintendent in the county of election. Upon receipt of any such report, the election  
114 superintendent shall cause such report to be available for inspection and copying in  
115 accordance with Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50. The election superintendent shall  
116 transmit a copy of each such report to the commission, electronically by eFiling or  
117 eFax, not later than 30 days after the end of the grace period. No fine, fee, or sanction,  
118 including but not limited to identifying a candidate as having filed late or failed to file,  
119 shall be imposed by the commission on a candidate for the failure of the election  
120 superintendent to timely transmit a copy of such report. The commission is authorized  
121 to impose civil penalties pursuant to subparagraph (b)(14)(C) of Code Section 21-5-6  
122 against an election superintendent who fails to properly transmit a copy of each such

123 report, upon finding that said superintendent willfully failed to comply with the  
124 provisions of this chapter; or

125 (B) A candidate for a public office listed in subparagraph (G) of paragraph (22) of  
126 Code Section 21-5-3 or the chairperson or treasurer of such candidate's campaign  
127 committee shall sign and file the required disclosure reports with the municipal clerk  
128 in the municipality of election or, if there is no clerk, with the chief executive officer  
129 of the municipality; provided, however, that a municipality and a county may enter into  
130 an agreement whereby such candidates, chairpersons, or treasurers shall file the  
131 required disclosure reports with the county election superintendent instead. Upon  
132 receipt of any such report, the municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the  
133 municipality, or county election superintendent, as applicable, shall cause such report  
134 to be available for inspection and copying in accordance with Article 4 of Chapter 18  
135 of Title 50. The municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the municipality, or county  
136 election superintendent, as applicable, shall transmit a copy of each such report to the  
137 commission, electronically by eFiling or eFax, not later than 30 days after the end of  
138 the grace period. No fine, fee, or sanction, including but not limited to identifying a  
139 candidate as having filed late or failed to file, shall be imposed by the commission on  
140 a candidate for the failure of the municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the county,  
141 or county election superintendent to timely transmit a copy of such report. The  
142 commission is authorized to impose civil penalties pursuant to subparagraph (b)(14)(C)  
143 of Code Section 21-5-6 against a municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the county,  
144 or county election superintendent who fails to properly transmit a copy of each such  
145 report, upon finding that said municipal clerk, chief executive officer of the county, or  
146 county election superintendent willfully failed to comply with the provisions of this  
147 chapter.

148 (2) This subsection shall stand repealed on December 31, 2025.

149 (b)(1) All reports shall list the following:

150 (A) As to any contribution of more than \$100.00, its amount and date of receipt, the  
151 election for which the contribution has been accepted and allocated, along with the  
152 name and mailing address of the contributor, and, if the contributor is an individual, that  
153 individual's occupation and the name of his or her employer. Such contributions shall  
154 include, but shall not be limited to, the purchase of tickets for events such as dinners,  
155 luncheons, rallies, and similar fund-raising events coordinated for the purpose of raising  
156 campaign contributions for the reporting person;

157 (B) As to any expenditure of more than \$100.00, its amount and date of expenditure,  
158 the name and mailing address of the recipient receiving the expenditure, and, if that  
159 recipient is an individual, that individual's occupation and the name of his or her  
160 employer and the general purpose of the expenditure;

161 (C) When a contribution consists of a loan, advance, or other extension of credit, the  
162 report shall also contain the name of the lending institution or party making the advance  
163 or extension of credit and the names, mailing addresses, occupations, and places of  
164 employment of all persons having any liability for repayment of the loan, advance, or  
165 extension of credit; and, if any such persons shall have a fiduciary relationship to the  
166 lending institution or party making the advance or extension of credit, the report shall  
167 specify such relationship;

168 (D) Total contributions received and total expenditures shall be reported for an election  
169 cycle as follows:

170 (i) The first report filed after an election year shall list the cash on hand brought  
171 forward from the previous election cycle, if any, and the total contributions received  
172 during the period covered by the report;

173 (ii) Subsequent reports shall list the total contributions received during the period  
174 covered by the report and the cumulative total of contributions received during the  
175 election cycle;

- 176 (iii) The first report filed after an election year shall list the total expenditures made  
177 during the period covered by the report;
- 178 (iv) Subsequent reports shall list the total expenditures made during the period  
179 covered by the report, the cumulative total of expenditures made during the election  
180 cycle, and net balance on hand; and
- 181 (v) If a public officer seeks reelection to the same public office, or if the public  
182 officer is a member of the General Assembly seeking reelection in another district as  
183 a result of redistricting, the net balance on hand at the end of the current election cycle  
184 shall be carried forward to the first report filed after the election year;
- 185 (E) The corporate, labor union, or other affiliation of any political action committee or  
186 independent committee making a contribution of more than \$100.00;
- 187 (F) Any investment made with funds of a campaign committee, independent  
188 committee, or political action committee and held outside such committee's official  
189 depository account during each reporting period for which an investment exists or a  
190 transaction applying to an identifiable investment is made. The report shall identify the  
191 name of the entity or person with whom such investment was made, the initial and any  
192 subsequent amount of such investment if such investment was made during the  
193 reporting period, and any profit or loss from the sale of such investment which occurred  
194 during such reporting period; and
- 195 (G) Total debt owed on the last day of the reporting period.
- 196 (2) Each report shall be in such form as will allow for the separate identification of a  
197 contribution or contributions which are less than \$100.00 but which become reportable  
198 due to the receipt of an additional contribution or contributions which when combined  
199 with such previously received contribution or contributions cumulatively equal or  
200 exceed \$100.00.
- 201 (c) Candidates or campaign committees which accept contributions, make expenditures  
202 designed to bring about the nomination or election of a candidate, or have filed a

203 declaration of intention to accept campaign contributions pursuant to subsection (g) of  
204 Code Section 21-5-30 shall file campaign contribution disclosure reports in compliance  
205 with the following schedule:

206 (1) In each nonelection year on January 31, April 30, July 31, and October 15:-

207 ~~(A) Candidates for public office and public officers as defined in subparagraphs (A),~~  
208 ~~(C), and (D) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3 shall file on January 31 and~~  
209 ~~June 30.~~

210 ~~(B) Candidates for public office and public officers as defined in subparagraphs (B),~~  
211 ~~(F), and (G) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3 shall file on June 30 and~~  
212 ~~December 31;~~

213 (2) In each election year:

214 (A) On January 31, April 30, July 31, and October 15 ~~June 30, September 30, October~~  
215 ~~25, and December 31;~~

216 (B) Six days before any run-off primary or election in which the candidate is listed on  
217 the ballot; and

218 (C) During the period of time between the last report due prior to the date of any  
219 election for which the candidate is qualified and the date of such election, all  
220 contributions of \$1,000.00 or more shall be reported within two business days of receipt  
221 and also reported on the next succeeding regularly scheduled campaign contribution  
222 disclosure report; provided, however, that this subparagraph shall only apply to  
223 contributions of \$1,000.00 or more that are designated for the same actual election as  
224 the one for which the individual is currently a candidate. Nothing in this Code section  
225 shall be construed to require a contribution of \$1,000.00 or more that is designated as  
226 a general election contribution to be reported during the two business day report period  
227 of a primary election;

228 (3) If the candidate is a candidate in a special primary or special primary runoff, 15 days  
229 prior to the special primary and six days prior to the special primary runoff; and

230 (4) If the candidate is a candidate in a special election or special election runoff, 15 days  
231 prior to the special election and six days prior to the special election runoff.

232 All persons or entities required to file reports shall have a ~~five-day~~ 15 day grace period in  
233 filing the required reports, except that the grace period shall be two days for required  
234 reports prior to run-off primaries or run-off elections, and no grace period shall apply to  
235 contributions required to be reported within two business days. Reports required to be filed  
236 within two business days of a contribution shall be reported by facsimile or electronic  
237 transmission. Any facsimile filing shall also have an identical electronic filing within five  
238 business days following the transmission of such facsimile filing. Each report required in  
239 the election year shall contain cumulative totals of all contributions which have been  
240 received and all expenditures which have been made in support of the campaign in question  
241 and which are required, or previously have been required, to be reported.

242 (d) In the event any candidate covered by this chapter has no opposition in either a primary  
243 or a general election and receives no contribution of more than \$100.00, such candidate  
244 shall only be required to make the initial and final report as required under this chapter.

245 ~~(d.1)(1) In the event a candidate for nomination or election to a public office listed in~~  
246 ~~subparagraph (F) or (G) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3 or the chairperson or~~  
247 ~~treasurer of a campaign committee organized to bring about the nomination or election~~  
248 ~~of such candidate signs and files with the appropriate official specified by paragraph (3)~~  
249 ~~or (4) of subsection (a) of this Code section a written notice that such candidate or~~  
250 ~~campaign committee does not intend to accept during such election cycle a combined~~  
251 ~~total of contributions exceeding \$2,500.00 for the campaign nor make a combined total~~  
252 ~~of expenditures exceeding \$2,500.00 for the campaign in such election cycle, then such~~  
253 ~~candidate or campaign committee shall not be required to file a report under this Code~~  
254 ~~section. The appropriate official shall transmit an electronic copy of the written notice~~  
255 ~~by eFiling or eFax to the commission within ten days of receipt of such notice. The~~  
256 ~~failure of the appropriate official to timely transmit such copy of the written notice to the~~

257 ~~commission shall not disqualify the candidate or campaign committee from the~~  
258 ~~exemption from report filing provided by this paragraph.~~

259 ~~(2) If such candidate or campaign committee exceeds the \$2,500.00 limit for either~~  
260 ~~accepting contributions or making expenditures for such campaign during such election~~  
261 ~~cycle as specified in paragraph (1) of this subsection but does not accept a combined total~~  
262 ~~of contributions exceeding \$5,000.00 in such election cycle nor make expenditures~~  
263 ~~exceeding \$5,000.00 in such election cycle, then such candidate or campaign committee~~  
264 ~~shall be required to file only the June 30 and December 31 reports required by~~  
265 ~~paragraph (2) of subsection (c) of this Code section. The first such report shall include~~  
266 ~~all contributions received and expenditures made beginning January 1 of such calendar~~  
267 ~~year.~~

268 ~~(3) If such candidate or campaign committee accepts a combined total of contributions~~  
269 ~~exceeding \$5,000.00 or makes expenditures exceeding \$5,000.00 for such campaign~~  
270 ~~during any such election cycle, then such candidate or campaign committee chairperson~~  
271 ~~or treasurer shall thereupon be subject to the reporting requirements of this Code section~~  
272 ~~the same as if the written notice authorized by this subsection had not been filed.~~

273 (e) Any person who makes contributions to, accepts contributions for, or makes  
274 expenditures on behalf of candidates, and any independent committee, shall file a  
275 registration in the same manner as is required of campaign committees prior to accepting  
276 or making contributions or expenditures. Such persons, other than independent  
277 committees, shall also file campaign contribution disclosure reports at the same times as  
278 required of the candidates they are supporting and a December 31 campaign contribution  
279 disclosure report regardless of whether the candidate they are supporting has a  
280 December 31 campaign contribution disclosure report due. The following persons shall  
281 be exempt from the foregoing registration and reporting requirements:

282 (1) ~~Individuals making aggregate contributions of \$25,000.00 or less directly to~~  
283 ~~candidates or the candidates' campaign committees in one calendar year;~~

284 (2) Persons other than individuals making aggregate contributions and expenditures to  
285 or on behalf of candidates of \$25,000.00 or less in one calendar year; and

286 (3) (2) Contributors who make contributions to only one candidate during one calendar  
287 year.

288 (e.1) Any political action committee which makes contributions to, accepts contributions  
289 for, or makes expenditures on behalf of candidates shall file a registration in the same  
290 manner as is required of campaign committees prior to accepting or making contributions  
291 or expenditures. Prior to such registration, such political action committee shall open a  
292 bank account in the name of such committee. Such political action committee shall  
293 maintain such bank account until the political action committee is terminated. Such  
294 political action committee shall also file campaign contribution disclosure reports on  
295 January 31, April 30, July 31, and October 15 until the bank account required by this  
296 subsection has been zeroed out and the political action committee has been terminated.

297 (f)(1) Any independent committee which accepts contributions or makes expenditures  
298 for the purpose of affecting the outcome of an election or advocates the election or defeat  
299 of any candidate shall register with the commission prior to accepting contributions or  
300 making expenditures and shall file disclosure reports as follows:

301 (A) On the first day of each of the two calendar months preceding any such election;

302 (B) Two weeks prior to the date of such election; and

303 (C) Within the two-week period prior to the date of such election the independent  
304 committee shall report within two business days any contributions or expenditure of  
305 more than \$1,000.00.

306 The independent committee shall file a final report prior to December 31 of the election  
307 year and shall file supplemental reports on June 30 and December 31 of each year that  
308 such independent committee continues to accept contributions or make expenditures.

309 (2) Reports filed by independent committees shall list the following:

- 310 (A) The amount and date of receipt, along with the name, mailing address, occupation,  
311 and employer of any person making a contribution of more than \$100.00;
- 312 (B) The name, mailing address, occupation, and employer of any person to whom an  
313 expenditure or provision of goods or services of the value of more than \$100.00 is made  
314 and the amount, date, and general purpose thereof, including the name of the candidate  
315 or candidates, if any, on behalf of whom, or in support of or in opposition to whom, the  
316 expenditure or provision was made;
- 317 (C) Total expenditures made as follows:
- 318 (i) Expenditures shall be reported for the applicable reporting year;
- 319 (ii) The first report of a reporting year shall list the total expenditures made during  
320 the period covered by the report; and
- 321 (iii) Subsequent reports shall list the total expenditures made during the period  
322 covered by the report, the cumulative total of expenditures made during the reporting  
323 year, and net balance on hand; and
- 324 (D) The corporate, labor union, or other affiliation of any political action committee,  
325 candidate, campaign committee, or independent committee making a contribution of  
326 the value of more than \$100.00.
- 327 (3) Whenever any independent committee makes an expenditure for the purpose of  
328 financing any communication intended to affect the outcome of an election, such  
329 communication shall clearly state that it has been financed by such independent  
330 committee.
- 331 (g) Any campaign committee which accepts contributions or makes expenditures designed  
332 to bring about the recall of a public officer or to oppose the recall of a public officer shall  
333 file campaign contribution disclosure reports as follows:
- 334 (1) An initial report shall be filed within 15 days after the date when the official recall  
335 petition forms were issued to the sponsors;
- 336 (2) A second report shall be filed 45 days after the filing of the initial report;

337 (3) A third report shall be filed within 20 days after the election superintendent certifies  
338 legal sufficiency or insufficiency of a recall petition; and

339 (4) A final report shall be filed prior to December 31 of the year in which the recall  
340 election is held or, in any case where such recall election is not held, a final report shall  
341 be filed prior to December 31 of any year in which such campaign committee accepts  
342 such contributions or makes such expenditures.

343 (h) Any campaign committee which accepts contributions or makes expenditures designed  
344 to bring about the approval or rejection by the voters of a proposed constitutional  
345 amendment or a state-wide referendum shall file a campaign contribution disclosure  
346 report 75, 45, and 15 days prior to the date of the election and shall file a final report prior  
347 to December 31 of the election year.

348 (i)(1) Any person elected to a public office who is required to file campaign contribution  
349 disclosure reports pursuant to this article shall, upon leaving public office with excess  
350 contributions, be required to file supplemental campaign contribution disclosure reports  
351 on ~~June 30 and December 31~~ January 31, April 30, July 31, and October 15 of each year  
352 until such contributions are expended in a campaign for elective office or used as  
353 provided in subsection (b) of Code Section 21-5-33.

354 (2) Any person who is an unsuccessful candidate in an election and who is required to  
355 file campaign contribution disclosure reports pursuant to this article shall for the  
356 remainder of the election cycle file such reports at the same times as a successful  
357 candidate and thereafter, upon having excess contributions from such campaign, be  
358 required to file a supplemental campaign contribution disclosure report ~~no later than~~  
359 ~~December 31~~ on January 31, April 30, July 31, and October 15 of each year until such  
360 contributions are expended in a campaign for elective office or used as provided in  
361 subsection (b) of Code Section 21-5-33. Any unsuccessful candidate in an election who  
362 is required to file campaign contribution disclosure reports pursuant to this article and  
363 who receives contributions following such election to retire debts incurred in such

364 campaign for elective office shall be required to file a supplemental campaign  
365 contribution disclosure report ~~no later than December 31~~ on January 31, April 30, July  
366 31, and October 15 of each year until such unpaid expenditures from such campaign are  
367 satisfied. Such reports shall be current through the end of the preceding month.

368 (j) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter to the contrary, soil and water  
369 conservation district supervisors elected pursuant to Article 2 of Chapter 6 of Title 2, the  
370 'Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law,' shall not be required to file campaign  
371 contribution disclosure reports under this Code section.

372 (k)(1) In addition to other penalties provided under this chapter, a late fee of \$125.00  
373 shall be imposed by the person or entity with which filing is required for each report that  
374 is filed late, and notice of such late fee shall be sent to the candidate and the candidate's  
375 committee in the same manner by which the penalized report was filed with the  
376 commission. However, if the report in question was not filed or was filed with the  
377 commission in a manner other than electronic filing or certified mail, return receipt  
378 requested, the commission shall utilize certified mail, return receipt requested, to notify  
379 the candidate and the candidate's committee of the late fee due. The notice shall include  
380 the schedule of increasing late fees for late filings and the dates upon which such late fees  
381 shall be increased. In addition, a late fee of \$250.00 shall be imposed on the fifteenth day  
382 after the due date for such report if the report has not been filed by such date. A late fee  
383 of \$1,000.00 shall be imposed on the forty-fifth day after the due date for such report if  
384 such report has not been filed. Notice by electronic means does not satisfy the  
385 requirements of this paragraph; and any increased late fees shall be stayed until at least  
386 ten days after proper notice has been given as specified in this paragraph.

387 (2) The commission shall retain \$25.00 of the first late fee received by the commission  
388 for processing pursuant to the provisions of Code Section 45-12-92.1.

389 (l) It shall be the duty of the commission ~~or other official~~ when it receives for filing any  
390 disclosure report or statement or other document that may be filed by mail to maintain with

391 the filed document a copy of the postal markings or statutory overnight delivery service  
 392 markings of any envelope, package, or wrapping in which the document was delivered for  
 393 filing if mailed or sent after the date such filing was due.

394 (m) Any person or entity which is required to be registered under this Code section shall  
 395 file a termination statement together with its final campaign contribution disclosure report  
 396 as required by this Code section within ten days of the dissolution of a campaign or  
 397 committee. The termination statement shall identify the person responsible for maintaining  
 398 campaign records as required by this chapter."

399

### SECTION 3.

400 Said chapter is further amended in Code Section 21-5-50, relating to filing by public officers,  
 401 filing by candidates for public office, filing by elected officials and members of the General  
 402 Assembly, and electronic filing, by revising subsections (a) and (c) as follows:

403 "(a)(1) Except as modified in subsection (c) of this Code section with respect to  
 404 candidates for state-wide elected public office;

405 (A) Each each public officer, as defined in subparagraphs (A) through (D) of paragraph  
 406 (22) of Code Section 21-5-3, and each person who qualifies as a candidate for election  
 407 to any such public office shall file with the commission ~~not before the first day of~~  
 408 ~~January nor~~ no later than ~~July~~ April 1 of each year in which such public officer holds  
 409 office ~~other than an election year~~ a financial disclosure statement for the preceding  
 410 calendar year; and

411 (B) Each each person who qualifies in a special election as a candidate for election as  
 412 a public officer, as defined in subparagraphs (A) through (D) of paragraph (22) of Code  
 413 Section 21-5-3, shall file with the commission, no later than the fifteenth day following  
 414 the date of qualifying as a candidate, a financial disclosure statement for the preceding  
 415 calendar year.

416 (2) Except as set forth in paragraph (3) of this subsection, a public officer, as defined in  
417 subparagraph (E) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3, shall not be required to file  
418 a financial disclosure statement pursuant to this Code section. Each such public officer  
419 shall, however, be deemed to be a public official for purposes of Code Section 45-10-26  
420 and shall be subject to the disclosure requirements set forth in Code Section 45-10-26.  
421 In addition, each such public officer shall file with the commission, prior to January 31  
422 each year, an affidavit confirming that such public officer took no official action in the  
423 previous calendar year that had a material effect on such public officer's private financial  
424 or business interests; provided, however, that, if a public officer as defined in  
425 subparagraph (E) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3 has previously filed or is  
426 subject to filing a financial disclosure statement with the commission pursuant to this  
427 paragraph, and said financial disclosure statement covers the same calendar year as would  
428 be covered by the affidavit required by this Code section, the public officer shall be  
429 exempted from filing an affidavit. No retired judge or senior judge of any court of this  
430 state shall be required to file an affidavit pursuant to this Code section.

431 (3) A public officer, as defined in subparagraph (E) of paragraph (22) of Code  
432 Section 21-5-3, who serves as a member of the commission shall be subject to the  
433 requirements for filing financial disclosure statements set forth in paragraph (1) of this  
434 subsection. In addition, each such public officer shall file with the commission, together  
435 with the financial disclosure statement, an affidavit confirming that such public officer  
436 took no official action in the previous calendar year that had a material effect on such  
437 public officer's private financial or business interests.

438 (3.1) Until December 31, 2025, a ~~A~~ public officer and candidates for election as a public  
439 officer, as defined in subparagraphs (F) and (G) of paragraph (22) of Code Section  
440 21-5-3, shall make filings of the same kind and in the same manner as provided in  
441 paragraph (1) of this subsection for other public officers and candidates for election as  
442 a public officer except that filings under this paragraph shall be made with the election

443 superintendent of the county in the case of public officers and candidates for election as  
444 a public officer as defined in said subparagraph (F) and shall be made with the municipal  
445 clerk in the municipality of election or, if there is no clerk, with the chief executive  
446 officer of the municipality in the case of public officers as defined in said subparagraph  
447 (G). The election superintendent, municipal clerk, or chief executive officer, as  
448 applicable, shall transmit, electronically by eFiling or eFax, a copy of each such report  
449 to the commission not later than 30 days after the close of the reporting period. No fine,  
450 fee, or sanction, including but not limited to identifying a public officer or candidate for  
451 election as a public officer as having filed late or failed to file, shall be imposed by the  
452 commission on the public officer or candidate for election as a public officer for the  
453 failure of the election superintendent, municipal clerk, or chief executive officer to timely  
454 transmit a copy of such report. As of January 1, 2026, such public officers and  
455 candidates shall file disclosure statements with the commission in the same manner  
456 provided for in paragraph (1) of this subsection.

457 (4) Each member of the State Transportation Board shall file a financial disclosure  
458 statement for the preceding calendar year no later than the sixtieth day following such  
459 member's election to the State Transportation Board. Thereafter, each board member  
460 shall file by ~~January 31~~ April 1 of each year a financial disclosure statement for the  
461 preceding year. In addition, each board member shall file with the commission, prior to  
462 ~~January 31~~ April 1 of each year, an affidavit confirming that such board member took no  
463 official action in the previous calendar year that had a material effect on such board  
464 member's private financial or business interests.

465 (5) The commission or the applicable official under paragraph (3.1) of this subsection  
466 shall review each financial disclosure statement to determine that such statement is in  
467 compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

468 (6) A public officer shall not, however, be required to file such a financial disclosure  
469 statement for the preceding calendar year in an election year if such public officer does

470 not qualify for nomination for election to succeed himself or herself or for election to any  
471 other public office subject to this chapter. For purposes of this paragraph, a public officer  
472 shall not be deemed to hold office in a year in which the public officer holds office for  
473 fewer than 15 days."

474 "(c)(1) Each person who qualifies with a political party as a candidate for party  
475 nomination to a public office elected state wide, (including an incumbent public officer  
476 elected state wide qualifying to succeed himself or herself), shall file with the  
477 commission, not later than ~~seven days after so qualifying~~ April 1 of such election year,  
478 a financial disclosure statement. Each person who qualifies as a candidate for election  
479 to a public office elected state wide through a nomination petition or convention shall  
480 likewise file a financial disclosure statement not later than ~~seven days after filing his or~~  
481 ~~her notice of candidacy~~ April 1 of such election year. Such financial disclosure statement  
482 shall comply with the requirements of subsections (a) and (b) of this Code section and  
483 shall in addition identify, for the preceding five calendar years:

484 (A) Each transaction or transactions which aggregate \$9,000.00 or more in a calendar  
485 year in which the candidate (whether for himself or herself or on behalf of any  
486 business) or any business in which such candidate or any member of his or her family  
487 has a substantial interest or is an officer of such business has transacted business with  
488 the government of the State of Georgia, the government of any political subdivision of  
489 the State of Georgia, or any agency of any such government; and

490 (B) Each transaction or transactions which aggregate \$9,000.00 or more in a calendar  
491 year in which the candidate or any business in which such candidate or any member of  
492 his or her family has a substantial interest or is an officer of such business received any  
493 income of any nature from any person who was at the time of such receipt of income  
494 represented by a lobbyist registered with the commission pursuant to Article 4 of this  
495 chapter.

496 (2) The financial disclosure statement required by paragraph (1) of this subsection shall  
497 include an itemized list of the transactions required to be reported, including the date of,  
498 dollar amount of, and parties to each such transaction. However, with respect to any  
499 transactions of a privileged nature only the total amount of such transactions shall be  
500 required to be reported, and names, dates, amounts of individual transactions, and other  
501 identifying data may be omitted; and for this purpose 'transactions of a privileged nature'  
502 shall include transactions between attorney and client, transactions between psychiatrist  
503 and patient, transactions between physician and patient, and any other transactions which  
504 are by law of a similar privileged and confidential nature.

505 (3) The financial disclosure statement required by paragraph (1) of this subsection shall  
506 be accompanied by a financial statement of the candidate's financial affairs for the five  
507 calendar years prior to the year in which the election is held and the first quarter of the  
508 calendar year in which the election is held.

509 (3.1) The financial disclosure statement required by paragraph (1) of this subsection shall  
510 include the source or sources of the candidate's income for the five calendar years prior  
511 to the year in which the election is held ~~and the first quarter of the calendar year in which~~  
512 ~~the election is held.~~

513 (4) As used in this subsection, the term:

514 (A) 'Agency' means any agency, authority, department, board, bureau, commission,  
515 committee, office, or instrumentality of the State of Georgia or any political subdivision  
516 of the State of Georgia.

517 (B) 'Financial statement' means a statement of a candidate's financial affairs ~~in a form~~  
518 ~~substantially equivalent to the short form financial statement required for bank directors~~  
519 ~~under the rules of the Department of Banking and Finance~~ which details the source and  
520 type of income with an indication of which of the following categories the amount or  
521 value of such item of income is within:

522 (i) Not more than \$1,000.00;

- 523 (ii) Greater than \$1,000.00 but not more than \$2,500.00;  
524 (iii) Greater than \$2,500.00 but not more than \$5,000.00;  
525 (iv) Greater than \$5,000.00 but not more than \$15,000.00;  
526 (v) Greater than \$15,000.00 but not more than \$50,000.00;  
527 (vi) Greater than \$50,000.00 but not more than \$100,000.00;  
528 (vii) Greater than \$100,000.00 but not more than \$1 million;  
529 (viii) Greater than \$1 million but not more than \$5 million; or  
530 (ix) Greater than \$5 million.

531 (C) 'Person' and 'transact business' shall have the meanings specified in Code  
532 Section 45-10-20.

533 (D) 'Substantial interest' means the direct or indirect ownership of 10 percent or more  
534 of the assets or stock of any business.

535 (5) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this subsection, if, due to a special election  
536 or otherwise, a person does not qualify as a candidate for nomination or election to public  
537 office until after the filing date otherwise applicable, such person shall make the filings  
538 required by this subsection within seven days after so qualifying."

539 **SECTION 4.**

540 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 21-5-51, relating to inspection and  
541 copying of financial disclosure statements, as follows:

542 "21-5-51.

543 (a) Financial disclosure statements filed pursuant to this article shall be public records and  
544 shall be subject to inspection and copying by any member of the public as provided by law  
545 for other public records.

546 (b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this Code section or any provision of Chapter 18 of  
547 Title 50 to the contrary, the commission shall redact any identifiable home addresses from  
548 any records the commission discloses, posts, or releases to the public."

**SECTION 5.**

549

550 Said chapter is further amended in Code Section 21-5-70, relating to definitions, by revising  
551 paragraphs (1) and (4.1) as follows:

552 "(1) 'Expenditure':

553 (A) Means a purchase, payment, distribution, loan, advance, deposit, or conveyance  
554 of money or anything of value made for the purpose of influencing the actions of any  
555 public officer, specifically including any such transaction which is made on behalf of  
556 or for the benefit of a public employee for the purpose of influencing a public officer;

557 (B) Includes any other form of payment when such can be reasonably construed as  
558 designed to encourage or influence a public officer;

559 (B.1) Includes reimbursement or payment of expenses exceeding ~~\$75.00~~ \$250.00  
560 provided to a public officer from any individual lobbyist for transportation, travel,  
561 lodging, registration, food, and beverages;

562 (C) Includes any gratuitous transfer, payment, subscription, advance, or deposit of  
563 money, services, tickets for admission to athletic, sporting, recreational, musical  
564 concert, or other entertainment events, or anything of value, unless consideration of  
565 equal or greater than face value is received;

566 (D) Includes reimbursement or payment of expenses for recreational or leisure  
567 activities; and

568 (E) Does not include anything defined in paragraph (4.1) of this Code section as a  
569 lobbying expenditure, the provisions of subparagraphs (A) through (D) of this  
570 paragraph notwithstanding."

571 "(4.1) 'Lobbying expenditure' means:

572 (A) Promotional items generally distributed to the general public or to public officers  
573 and food and beverages produced in Georgia;

574 (B) An award, plaque, certificate, memento, or similar item given in recognition of the  
575 recipient's civic, charitable, political, professional, or public service;

- 576 (C) Discounts, upgrades, memberships, or other accommodations extended by a  
577 business to a bona fide customer; or legitimate salary, benefits, fees, commissions, or  
578 expenses associated with a recipient's nonpublic business, employment, trade, or  
579 profession;
- 580 (D) Food, beverages, and registration at group events to which all members of an  
581 agency, as defined in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of Code Section 21-5-30.2, are  
582 invited. For purposes of this subparagraph, an agency shall also include the House of  
583 Representatives, the Senate, standing committees of such bodies but not for more than  
584 one of such group events per committee per calendar year, caucuses of members of the  
585 majority or minority political parties of the House or Senate, other caucuses of the  
586 House or Senate as approved by the House Committee on Ethics or the Senate Ethics  
587 Committee, and the governing body of each political subdivision of this state;
- 588 (E) Campaign contributions or expenditures as defined by Code Section 21-5-3 and  
589 reported as required by Article 2 of this chapter;
- 590 (F) Reimbursement or payment of actual and reasonable expenses provided to a public  
591 officer and his or her necessary public employee staff members for such public officer's  
592 and staff members' individual transportation, lodging, travel, and registration for  
593 attending educational, informational, charitable, or civic meetings or conferences that  
594 are held at locations within the United States and directly relate to the official duties of  
595 that public officer or the office of that public officer, plus food and beverages for such  
596 public officer, his or her necessary public employee staff members, and spouse while  
597 attending such educational, informational, charitable, or civic meetings or conferences;
- 598 (G) Anything which:
- 599 (i) Does not qualify as a lobbying expenditure under subparagraphs (A) through (F)  
600 of this paragraph; and

601 (ii) Would qualify as an expenditure under subparagraph (B.1) of paragraph (1) of  
 602 this Code section except that it does not exceed an amount or value of ~~\$75.00~~ \$250.00  
 603 per person."

604 **SECTION 6.**

605 Said chapter is further amended in Code Section 21-5-73, relating to lobbyist disclosure  
 606 reports, by revising subsections (b), (c), (d), and (e) as follows:

607 "(b) A person who is required to register under this article and:

608 (1) Lobbies ~~lobbies~~ to promote or oppose the passage of any legislation by the General  
 609 Assembly, or any committee of either chamber or a joint committee thereof, or the  
 610 approval or veto of legislation by the Governor; ~~shall file a semimonthly disclosure report~~  
 611 ~~on the first and fifteenth day of each month, current through the end of the preceding~~  
 612 ~~report, beginning January 15 and continuing throughout the period that the General~~  
 613 ~~Assembly is in session.~~

614 (2) Lobbies to promote or oppose the passage of any ordinance or resolution by a public  
 615 officer specified under subparagraph (F) or (G) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3,  
 616 or any committee of such public officers, or the approval or veto of any such ordinance  
 617 or resolution;

618 (3) Lobbies to promote or oppose the passage of any legislation by the General  
 619 Assembly, or any committee of either chamber or a joint committee thereof, or the  
 620 approval or veto of legislation by the Governor;

621 (4) As an employee of the executive branch or judicial branch of local government,  
 622 lobbies to promote or oppose the passage of any ordinance or resolution by a public  
 623 officer specified under subparagraph (F) or (G) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3,  
 624 or any committee of such public officers, or the approval or veto of any such ordinance  
 625 or resolution;

626 (5) Lobbies to influence a public officer or state agency in the selection of a vendor to  
627 supply any goods or services to any state agency; or

628 (6) Lobbies to promote or oppose any matter before the State Transportation Board  
629 shall file a monthly disclosure report, current through the end of the preceding period, on  
630 or before the fifth day of each month.

631 (c) In addition to the requirements of subsection (b) of this Code section, a ~~A~~ person who  
632 is required to register under this article and lobbies to promote or oppose the passage of any  
633 ordinance or resolution by a public officer specified under subparagraph (F) or (G) of  
634 paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3, or any committee of such public officers, or the  
635 approval or veto of any such ordinance or resolution shall: file a disclosure report on or  
636 before the fifth day of each month, provided that all persons or entities required to file such  
637 reports shall have a five-day grace period in filing the required reports.

638 ~~(1) File a disclosure report, current through the end of the preceding month, on or before~~  
639 ~~the fifth day of May, September, and January of each year instead of the reports required~~  
640 ~~by subsections (b) and (d) of this Code section; and~~

641 ~~(2) File such report with the commission, file a copy of such with the election~~  
642 ~~superintendent of each county involved if the report contains any lobbying expenditures~~  
643 ~~relating to county or county school district affairs, and file a copy of such report with the~~  
644 ~~municipal clerk (or if there is no municipal clerk, with the chief executive officer of the~~  
645 ~~municipality) of each municipality involved if the report contains any lobbying~~  
646 ~~expenditures relating to municipal affairs or independent school district affairs.~~

647 ~~(d) A person who is required to register under this article and:~~

648 ~~(1) Lobbies to promote or oppose the passage of any legislation by the General~~  
649 ~~Assembly, or any committee of either chamber or a joint committee thereof, or the~~  
650 ~~approval or veto of legislation by the Governor;~~

651 ~~(2) As an employee of the executive branch or judicial branch of local government,~~  
652 ~~lobbies to promote or oppose the passage of any ordinance or resolution by a public~~

653 ~~officer specified under subparagraph (F) or (G) of paragraph (22) of Code Section 21-5-3,~~  
654 ~~or any committee of such public officers, or the approval or veto of any such ordinance~~  
655 ~~or resolution;~~

656 ~~(3) Lobbies to influence a public officer or state agency in the selection of a vendor to~~  
657 ~~supply any goods or services to any state agency, or~~

658 ~~(4) Lobbies to promote or oppose any matter before the State Transportation Board~~  
659 ~~shall file a monthly disclosure report, current through the end of the preceding period, on~~  
660 ~~or before the fifth day of each month, provided, however, that such monthly reports shall~~  
661 ~~not be filed during any period that the lobbyist files a semimonthly report pursuant to~~  
662 ~~subsection (b) of this Code section.~~

663 (d) Reserved.

664 (e) Reports filed by lobbyists shall be verified and shall include:

665 (1) A description of all lobbying expenditures described in subparagraphs (D), (F),  
666 and (G) of paragraph (4.1) of Code Section 21-5-70, or the value thereof made on behalf  
667 of or for the benefit of a public officer or on behalf of or for the benefit of a public  
668 employee for the purpose of influencing a public officer by the lobbyist or employees of  
669 the lobbyist or by any person on whose behalf the lobbyist is registered if the lobbyist has  
670 actual knowledge of such lobbying expenditure. The description of each reported  
671 lobbying expenditure shall include:

672 (A) The name and title of the public officer or public employee or, if the lobbying  
673 expenditure is simultaneously incurred for an identifiable group of public officers or  
674 public employees the individual identification of whom would be impractical, a general  
675 description of that identifiable group;

676 (B) The amount, date, and description of the lobbying expenditure and a summary of  
677 all spending classified by category. Such categories shall include meals, lodging,  
678 travel, and tickets;

679 (C) The aggregate lobbying expenditures described in subparagraph (D) of  
680 paragraph (4.1) of Code Section 21-5-70 incurred during the reporting period; provided,  
681 however, that expenses for travel and for food, beverage, and lodging in connection  
682 therewith afforded a public officer or public employee shall be reported in the same  
683 manner as under subparagraphs (A), (B), and (D) of this paragraph;

684 (D) If applicable, the number of the bill, resolution, ordinance, or regulation pending  
685 before the governmental entity in support of or opposition to which the lobbying  
686 expenditure was made; and

687 (E) If applicable, the rule or regulation number or description of the rule or regulation  
688 pending before the state agency in support of or opposition to which the lobbying  
689 expenditure was made;

690 (1.1) In any case where lobbying expenditures are reported pursuant to subparagraph (A)  
691 of paragraph (1) of this subsection for an identifiable group not listed in subparagraph (D)  
692 of paragraph (4.1) of Code Section 21-5-70, the lobbyist shall certify on the disclosure  
693 report that no lobbying expenditure made on behalf of or for the benefit of any individual  
694 public officer exceeded ~~\$75.00~~ \$250.00;

695 (2) For those who are required to register under this article and lobby to influence a  
696 public officer or state agency in the selection of a vendor to supply any goods or services  
697 to any state agency, the name of any vendor or vendors for which the lobbyist undertook  
698 to influence the awarding of a contract or contracts by any state agency together with a  
699 description of the contract or contracts and the monetary amount of the contract or  
700 contracts; and

701 (3) For those who are required to register under this article and lobby to promote or  
702 oppose the passage of any rule or regulation of any state agency, the name of the  
703 individual or entity for which the lobbyist undertook to influence the rule or regulation  
704 of a state agency."

705

**SECTION 7.**

706 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.