

1 H.741

2 Introduced by Representative Lorber of Burlington

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Elections; campaign finance; reports; searchable database

6 Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to require the secretary of state to
7 develop and update a searchable online database of campaign finance reports
8 and related information.

9 An act relating to a searchable database for campaign finance reports

10 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

11 Sec. 1. 17 V.S.A. § 2810 is amended to read:

12 § 2810. CANDIDATE INFORMATION PUBLICATION; ON-LINE
13 DATABASE

14 (a) For each two-year general election cycle, the secretary of state shall
15 develop and ~~continuously~~ continually update a publicly accessible campaign
16 database. The database shall ~~contain at least the following information for all~~
17 ~~candidates for statewide and county office and for the general assembly: for~~
18 ~~candidates receiving public financing grants, the amount of each grant~~
19 ~~awarded; the information contained in campaign finance reports filed under~~
20 ~~this chapter; and all reports of mass media activity expenditures filed under~~

1 ~~section 2883 of this title. The database shall also include campaign finance~~
2 ~~reports filed by candidates for federal office. The information in the database,~~
3 ~~together with any biographical sketches and position statements submitted to~~
4 ~~the secretary of state by such candidates, shall be made available to the public~~
5 ~~through the Vermont state home page on line service, or through printed~~
6 ~~reports from the secretary in response to a public request within 14 days of the~~
7 ~~date of the request~~ be made available online on the secretary of state's website
8 and shall conform to the following requirements:

9 (1) Form of database.

10 (A) The database shall be accessible and downloaded without
11 requiring the user to have a specific software or browser. The data available
12 for downloading shall be free.

13 (B) Data included in the database shall be separated into distinctive
14 fields designated by field headings that shall be searchable within the database,
15 including searching by office, candidate, political committee, political party,
16 contributor, and transaction.

17 (2) Data included in the database. The following information shall be
18 uploaded into the database:

19 (A) All reports required to be filed with the secretary of state under
20 this chapter;

21 (B) Campaign finance reports filed by candidates for federal office;

1 (C) For candidates receiving public financing grants, the amount of
2 each grant awarded.

3 (3) Timeliness of data. Reports shall be made available on the database
4 as soon as practicable after the reports are filed with the secretary of state.

5 (4) Accuracy of data. Reports shall be audited by the secretary of state's
6 office to ensure their information has been submitted correctly.

7 (b) Any candidate for statewide office and any candidate for federal office
8 qualified to be on the ballot in this state may submit to the secretary of state a
9 photograph, biographical sketch, and position statement of a length and format
10 specified by the secretary for the purposes of preparing a candidate information
11 publication. Without making changes in the material presented, the secretary
12 shall prepare a candidate information publication for statewide distribution
13 prior to the general election, which includes the candidates' photographs,
14 biographies, and position statements, a brief explanation of the process used to
15 obtain candidate submissions, and, with respect to offices for which public
16 financing is available, an indication of which candidates are receiving Vermont
17 campaign finance grants and which candidates are not receiving Vermont
18 campaign finance grants. The secretary shall prepare, publish, and distribute
19 the candidate information publication throughout the state no later than one
20 week prior to the general election. The secretary shall also seek voluntary
21 distribution of the candidate information publication in weekly and daily

1 newspapers and other publications in the state. The candidate information
2 publication shall also be available in large type, in audiotape, and ~~Internet~~
3 ~~versions~~ on the secretary of state's website.

4 (c) The information contained in subsections (a) and (b) of this section
5 shall also be made available through printed reports from the secretary in
6 response to a public request within 14 days of the date of the request.

7 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on passage.