

Testimony of Earl F Glynn
Favoring SB 563
To Include Judicial Retention Elections under Campaign Finance Laws
10 March 2010

Chairwoman Schmidt and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you about proposed changes to the campaign finance act.

My name is Earl Glynn with the Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity, but I am here today representing and testifying only for myself as a concerned citizen, who is a proponent of open government, open records, and public disclosure.

Campaign disclosures and other documents available under the Kansas Open Records Act are key parts to many investigations of Kansas state and local governments.

As a citizen journalist for a number of years I used campaign disclosures in a number of investigations about the appropriateness of government actions, especially political appointments that seemed to correlate with political contributions.

I am interested in campaign disclosures that may later reveal conflicts of interest or inappropriate actions taken by elected officials. The public has the right to know and understand how campaign contributions may later affect elected officials, including elections dealing with the retention of judges, such as Supreme Court justices.

I have attended all the Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission meetings for over a year. Last month I listened to their discussion about the opinion requested by Justice Carol Beier as to whether campaign finance laws applied to judicial retention elections. While some may say the intent of the existing law was to cover such elections, the existing statute is missing specifics about such contests. The Ethics Commission ruled no statute covered campaign finance regarding judicial retention elections.

Without the proposed change of SB 563, both sides will be allowed under the law to raise and spend any amount of money on judicial retention elections with no disclosure of amounts or donors. This "fix" in SB 563 is needed to provide specifics missing in the intent of the existing law. This fix will provide "sunshine" on such political contributions to ensure integrity of our state government.

I believe that it is in the interest of good government for all Kansans to require disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures in judicial retention elections.