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# Bill to prohibit lawmakers' fundraising weakened, but still alive

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By Keoki Kerr, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - A proposal that would ban state lawmakers from raising campaign funds during the legislative session has been watered down considerably but the bill's sponsor is thankful it finally got a hearing after 20 years of being dead on arrival.

Wahiawa State Rep. Marcus Oshiro said he first introduced the proposal 20 years ago and it never got a hearing and died year after year until this year, when it received a hearing Thursday.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 29 other states place some restrictions on whether lawmakers can receive political contributions during legislative sessions. But Hawaii has none.

"There may be some linkage between bills' passage, bill failures, appropriations, confirmations being tied to campaign fundraising. This would clear the deck, clear the air," Oshiro said.

Oshiro introduced the bill, HB327, to prohibit lawmakers from accepting or raising campaign funds during Hawaii's four-month legislative session.

"It cures the perception of a quid pro quo that many have in this state. It has the endorsement of Common Cause Hawaii and the League of Women Voters," Oshiro said.

Carmille Lim, executive director of Common Cause Hawaii, said,

"We feel that this bill will help to alleviate some of the concerns of inappropriate behavior and bribery that could happen during legislative session and when legislators fundraise during session."

Campaign spending reports show several State House members raised most of their money for last year's campaign during last year's legislative session.

State Rep. Ty Cullen brought in 59 percent of his campaign funds while lawmakers were in session in 2014. House Speaker Joe Souki raised 57 percent of his campaign funds during that same period, followed by Representatives Kaniela Ing and John Mizuno, who reported 51 and 48 percent of their campaign contributions during last year's legislative session.

The House Judiciary committee weakened the proposal Thursday, reducing the restriction on political donations to one week before five key legislative deadlines, for a total of five weeks out of the four-month session.

State Rep. Karl Rhoads, who chairs the committee, said, "There's still the potential for abuse if you have people who, if they're purchasable, then they're still going to be purchasable two weeks after session, just like they were in the middle of session."

"The amendments that we put in were to try to really target the crucial points, the spots in the system where abuse is most likely," Rhoads added.

Lim, of Common Cause, reacted to the changes to the bill this way: "Even though it's a lot weaker than we had hoped for, it's still a step forward."

The State House Friday approved the proposal on second reading. It now moves to the House finance committee for further consideration.

Oshiro had a message for Rhoads Friday, and said, "Thank you very much for having the guts to hear a bill like this. It's controversial, it's probably going to raise the ire of some of his own colleagues but I think it's a step in the right direction, and I really appreciate what he has done."

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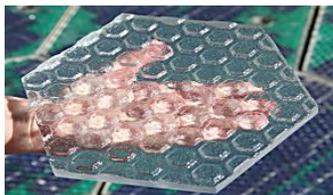
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