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## Hawaii bill would make super PACs disclose source of funding

Cathy Bussewitz February 25, 2015



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HONOLULU >> A bill in the Hawaii Legislature would make it easier for voters to understand who is supporting and funding political action committees.

The bill targets super PACs, which can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money on elections. In the 2014 election cycle, super PACs in Hawaii spent more than \$10 million on ballot initiatives and \$6 million on candidates, according to Common Cause Hawaii.

The goal of the bill is change the state's campaign finance laws to deter corruption and increase transparency and accountability.

"One of the biggest mysteries in the last couple of election cycles has been the growth of independent expenditures by non-candidate committees," said Democratic Sen. Gilbert Keith-Agaran, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee Judiciary who introduced the bill. "They're not supposed to be directed by a candidate, they're not supposed to be coordinated, and increasingly they're becoming important, not just on the mainland, but also here."

Keith-Agaran introduced the bill, SB 1344, in an effort to peel back the layers of the organizations that are pouring millions of dollars into Hawaii campaigns. He said super PACs were spending money to influence county council elections throughout the islands.

"The amount of money they're spending is sometimes disproportionate to the kind of offices that we're talking about," Keith-Agaran said.

The proposal would make a super PAC reveal whether its contributors and recipients are also required to disclose campaign spending information. If so, the super PAC would then have to provide access to that information.

The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced the bill Wednesday. No one testified against the measure.

Supports of the bill say Hawaii's disclosure requirements for super PACs are inadequate, and that it's difficult for voters to find out the sources and recipients of the money being spent.

For example, the Democratic Governors Association poured \$1.3 million into the Hawaii Forward super PAC during the 2014 election cycle, according to Hawaii's Campaign Spending Commission.

Under the proposal, Hawaii Forward's filing would have to say the money was from the Democratic Governors Association and would then have to indicate whether a voter could look up who made the donations to the Democratic Governors Association, Keith-Agaran explained.

"It allows people to go back a little bit, to see who's making the donations beyond the entity," Keith-Agaran said.