

April 13, 2009

H 1493. LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGNS PILOT. Filed 4/9/09. *TO ESTABLISH A PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE CANDIDATES FOR SELECTED LEGISLATIVE SEATS WITH THE OPTION OF FINANCING THEIR CAMPAIGNS FROM A PUBLICLY SUPPORTED FUND, PROVIDED THAT THEY GAIN AUTHORIZATION TO DO SO FROM REGISTERED VOTERS AND THAT THEY ABIDE BY STRICT FUND-RAISING AND SPENDING LIMITS; AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS.*

Amends GS Chapter 163 by adding new Article 22R to establish a pilot program for public financing of legislative campaigns. Authorizes use of money from the North Carolina Voter-Owned Elections Fund (Fund) for the pilot program and specifies money that must be deposited into the Fund. Provides for the selection of nine districts for the pilot program every two years and directs that eligibility for participation be based initially upon need and the party affiliations of registered voters in the legislative district. Of the eligible districts, Senate and House leadership would then nominate districts for inclusion in the program and the State Board of Elections would make the final selection of three Senate and six House districts. Allows a candidate to participate in the program after (1) filing a declaration of intent to participate in the pilot program, (2) collecting sufficient contributions from enough individuals to demonstrate support of candidacy, (3) filing a notice of candidacy, and (4) complying with other applicable election laws. Outlines detailed restrictions on contributions to and expenditures by candidates participating in the pilot program as well as procedures and guidelines for distributing money and matching funds to candidates from the Fund. Clarifies limits on fund availability for contested primaries. Requires that candidates participating in the program and others comply with certain reporting requirements. Provides that certified unaffiliated and new party candidates are eligible for revenues from the fund. Directs the Board of Elections, with the advice of the Advisory Council, to administer the pilot program and provides for civil penalties for violations. Provides that the pilot program would be operational beginning with the 2012 elections.

Intro. by Cotham, Jones, Farmer-Butterfield. GS 163