

House Bill 6332
Sponsor: Rep. Larry Julian
Committee: Commerce

Complete to 9-19-02

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 6332 AS INTRODUCED 9-18-02

The bill would amend the Michigan Campaign Finance Act to require gubernatorial candidates receiving money from the state campaign fund to participate in public debates, both in the primary election and the general election. The provisions would be known as the Candidate Accountability Law. In the primary, candidates would have to appear together in debates in different geographic regions of the state, as determined jointly by the candidates; in the general election, the debates would have to be held in each of eight specified media markets. The bill also would specify the format of the debates.

A candidate who did not participate as required would have to return the amount received from the state campaign fund for that election. However, a candidate who was not able to participate because he or she was physically or mentally unfit, or because of other exigent circumstances agreed upon by all candidates, would not be required to return money.

Primary Election. A candidate who received money from the campaign fund and whose name was eligible to appear on the primary election ballot would have to participate in public debates with all the other such candidates of the same party. A public debate would have to be scheduled in each calendar month beginning in the month in which more than one candidate of the same party qualified for the ballot and ending in the month immediately before the month in which the primary election was held. The candidates by mutual agreement would designate the geographic regions where the debates would be held. If they couldn't agree, the secretary of state would designate the regions.

General Election. A candidate who received money from the state campaign fund and whose name was eligible to appear on the general election ballot would have to participate in public debates with all other such candidates. A public debate would be held in each media market specified in the bill during the period beginning in the month in which more than one candidate became eligible to appear on the general election ballot and ending in the month immediately before the month in which the general election was held. The media markets designated in the bill are those served by media in Detroit, Flint, Traverse City, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Alpena, Marquette, and southwest Michigan. A public debate would be scheduled with the agreement of all candidates required to participate or, if they could not agree, by the secretary of state after reasonable consideration of the candidates' schedules.

Debate Format. A debate in either the primary or general election held under the bill would have to follow the following requirements:

- A neutral party would be chosen by the candidates to serve as moderator. If the candidates could not agree on a moderator, the secretary of state would make the designation.
- Each candidate would have to be given an equal opportunity to ask any other candidate a question. The responding candidate would have two minutes to respond and the candidate who asked the question would have one minute to reply to the response.
- Each candidate would have to be positioned behind a podium.

MCL 169.265a

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.