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AB-789 Political Reform Act of 1974: security expenses. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 789

CHAPTER 621

An act to amend Section 89517.5 of the Government Code, relating to the Political Reform Act of 1974.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 11, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 789, Bonta. Political Reform Act of 1974: security expenses.

The Political Reform Act of 1974 regulates the use of campaign funds held by candidates for elective office, elected officers, and campaign committees. The act authorizes a candidate or elected officer to use campaign funds to pay or reimburse the state for the reasonable costs of installing and monitoring a home or office electronic security system or for another tangible item related to security, and for the reasonable costs of providing personal security to a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer, provided that the threat or potential threat to safety arises from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer or from staff's position as staff of the candidate or elected officer. The act permits a candidate or elected officer to expend a maximum of \$10,000 of campaign funds for these purposes during their lifetime.

This bill would eliminate that monetary cap until January 1, 2029. Beginning January 1, 2029, the bill would instead permit a candidate or elected officer to expend a maximum of \$10,000 of campaign funds for these purposes per calendar year.

Existing law exempts payments to a relative, within the third degree of consanguinity, of a candidate or elected officer from the definition of "security expenses."

This bill would instead exempt payments to the candidate's or elected officer's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle, or first cousin or the spouse of any such person from the definition of "security expenses."

This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 89517.5 of the Government Code proposed by AB 808, to be operative only if this bill and AB 808 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

The Political Reform Act of 1974, an initiative measure, provides that the Legislature may amend the act to further the act's purposes upon a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of each house of the Legislature and compliance with specified procedural requirements.

This bill would declare that it furthers the purposes of the act.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 89517.5 of the Government Code is amended to read:

89517.5. (a) (1) For purposes of this section, "security expenses" include all of the following:

(A) The reasonable costs of installing and monitoring a home or office electronic security for a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.

(B) The reasonable costs of providing personal security to a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.

(C) Any other tangible item related to security for a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.

(2) "Security expenses" do not include either of the following:

(A) Payments to the candidate's or elected officer's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle, or first cousin or the spouse of any such person.

(B) Payments for a firearm.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding Section 89517, campaign funds may be used to pay, or reimburse the state, for security expenses to protect a candidate, an elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer, provided that the threat or potential threat to safety arises from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer or from staff's position as staff of the candidate or elected officer.

(2) (A) A candidate or elected officer may expend campaign funds pursuant to this section without any monetary cap until January 1, 2029.

(B) Beginning January 1, 2029, a candidate or elected officer may expend up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) of campaign funds pursuant to this section per calendar year. This limit applies regardless of the number of offices the candidate or elected officer seeks or holds.

(c) (1) If a committee uses campaign funds to pay, or reimburse the state, for the costs of installing a home or office electronic security system or for any other tangible item related to security, either the security system or other item shall be returned to the committee or reimbursement for the security system or other item shall be made to the campaign fund account of the committee that paid for the security system or other item, pursuant to the requirements of paragraphs (2) and (3).

(2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), return or reimbursement is due within one year of when the elected officer leaves the office for which the security system or other tangible item related to security was purchased or when the candidate is no longer a candidate for the office for which the security system or other item was purchased, or, if applicable, upon sale of the property on which the security system is installed, whichever occurs sooner.

(B) If there is a continuing threat to the physical safety of the candidate or elected officer, the threat arises from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer, and the threat has been reported to and verified by an appropriate law enforcement agency, return or reimbursement is due within one year of when the threat verified by the law enforcement agency ceases, or, if applicable, upon sale of the property on which the security system is installed, whichever occurs sooner.

(3) The amount of the reimbursement shall be the fair market value of the security system or other tangible item related to security at the time that reimbursement is paid or due pursuant to paragraph (2), whichever occurs sooner. For a security system installed at the home or office of, or for an item purchased for, a candidate or elected officer, the candidate or elected officer shall pay the reimbursement. For a security system installed at the home or office of, or for an item purchased for, immediate family or staff, either the candidate or elected officer, or the immediate family or staff, shall pay the reimbursement.

(d) The immediate family or staff of the candidate or elected officer shall not be personally liable for reimbursement for expenditures for security expenses pursuant to this section.

(e) (1) The candidate or elected officer shall report an expenditure pursuant to subdivision (b) and a reimbursement pursuant to subdivision (c) on the candidate's or elected officer's campaign statement filed pursuant to Article 2 (commencing with Section 84200) of Chapter 4.

(2) With each report described in paragraph (1), the candidate or elected officer shall also submit a form to the Commission, in a manner prescribed by the Commission and signed under penalty of perjury, that describes and verifies the threat or potential

threat to the candidate or elected officer, or to their immediate family or staff, that arose from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer and that necessitated the expenditure or reimbursement.

(3) As part of the recordkeeping requirements in Section 84104, the candidate or elected officer shall maintain detailed accounts, records, bills, and receipts relating to an expenditure or reimbursement described in paragraph (1), including records providing evidence of the threat or potential threat to safety that gave rise to the need for the expenditure.

SEC. 1.5. Section 89517.5 of the Government Code is amended to read:

89517.5. (a) (1) For purposes of this section, "security expenses" include all of the following:

(A) The reasonable costs of installing and monitoring a home or office electronic security for a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.

(B) The reasonable costs of providing personal security to a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.

(C) Any other tangible item related to security for a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.

(2) "Security expenses" do not include either of the following:

(A) Payments to the candidate's or elected officer's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle, or first cousin or the spouse of any such person.

(B) Payments for a firearm.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding Section 89517, campaign funds may be used to pay, or reimburse the state, for security expenses to protect a candidate, an elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer, provided that the threat or potential threat to safety arises from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer or from staff's position as staff of the candidate or elected officer.

(2) (A) A candidate or elected officer may expend campaign funds pursuant to this section without any monetary cap until January 1, 2029.

(B) Beginning January 1, 2029, a candidate or elected officer may expend up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) of campaign funds pursuant to this section per calendar year. This limit applies regardless of the number of offices the candidate or elected officer seeks or holds.

(c) (1) If a committee uses campaign funds to pay, or reimburse the state, for the costs of installing a home or office electronic security system or for any other tangible item related to security, either the security system or other item shall be returned to the committee or reimbursement for the security system or other item shall be made to the campaign fund account of the committee that paid for the security system or other item, pursuant to the requirements of paragraphs (2) and (3).

(2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), return or reimbursement is due within one year of when the elected officer leaves the office for which the security system or other tangible item related to security was purchased or when the candidate is no longer a candidate for the office for which the security system or other item was purchased, or, if applicable, upon sale of the property on which the security system is installed, whichever occurs sooner.

(B) If there is a continuing threat to the physical safety of the candidate or elected officer, the threat arises from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer, and the threat has been reported to and verified by an appropriate law enforcement agency, return or reimbursement is due within one year of when the threat verified by the law enforcement agency ceases, or, if applicable, upon sale of the property on which the security system is installed, whichever occurs sooner.

(3) The amount of the reimbursement shall be the fair market value of the security system or other tangible item related to security at the time that reimbursement is paid or due pursuant to paragraph (2), whichever occurs sooner. For a security system installed at the home or office of, or for an item purchased for, a candidate or elected officer, the candidate or elected officer shall pay the reimbursement. For a security system installed at the home or office of, or for an item purchased for, immediate family or staff, either the candidate or elected officer, or the immediate family or staff, shall pay the reimbursement.

(d) The immediate family or staff of the candidate or elected officer shall not be personally liable for reimbursement for expenditures for security expenses pursuant to this section.

(e) (1) The candidate or elected officer shall report an expenditure pursuant to subdivision (b) and a reimbursement pursuant to subdivision (c) on the candidate's or elected officer's campaign report filed pursuant to Article 2 (commencing with Section 84200) of Chapter 4.

(2) With each report described in paragraph (1), the candidate or elected officer shall also submit a form to the Commission, in a manner prescribed by the Commission and signed under penalty of perjury, that describes and verifies the threat or potential threat to the candidate or elected officer, or to their immediate family or staff, that arose from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer and that necessitated the expenditure or reimbursement.

(3) As part of the recordkeeping requirements in Section 84104, the candidate or elected officer shall maintain detailed accounts, records, bills, and receipts relating to an expenditure or reimbursement described in paragraph (1), including records providing evidence of the threat or potential threat to safety that gave rise to the need for the expenditure.

SEC. 2. Section 1.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 89517.5 of the Government Code proposed by both this bill and AB 808. That section of this bill shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2026, but this bill becomes operative first, (2) each bill amends Section 89517.5 of the Government Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after AB 808, in which case Section 89517.5 of the Government Code, as amended by Section 1 of this bill, shall remain operative only until the operative date of AB 808, at which time Section 1.5 of this bill shall become operative.

SEC. 3. The Legislature finds and declares that this bill furthers the purposes of the Political Reform Act of 1974 within the meaning of subdivision (a) of Section 81012 of the Government Code.