

March 24, 2025

Common Cause MN is a nonpartisan grassroots organization working to create an open, transparent, and accountable government. Although we have a C4 arm, it is limited to lobbying activities, we do not endorse a political party or candidate. We have over 1.5M members nationwide and offices in 28 states, I lead the MN office. Over 26,000 Minnesotans belonging to various party affiliations, or not being affiliated, have come together to support our work ensuring our Republic's democracy is safeguarded, and everyone's vote counts.

We are grateful to Senator Westlin for moving SF1812, to address the unprecedented practice of having a superPAC offering registered voters money in exchange for their signature on a petition against an elected official on the state supreme court they are also working to defeat. In effect, bribery.

We support SF1812 and ask Committee members to vote yes for the following reasons:

SF1812 addresses the problem of bribery driven by mega-wealthy people through their superPAC. This is an issue for our Republic's democratic process for several reasons:

1. **Perception of Vote Buying:** Offering money to voters in exchange for signing a petition can be perceived as a form of vote buying, which undermines the integrity of the democratic process. It raises concerns about whether voters are making decisions based on their genuine beliefs or simply for financial gain.
2. **Influence of Wealthy Individuals:** The involvement of any mega-wealthy billionaire in funding such initiatives, as we see playing out in WI, highlight the disproportionate influence that wealthy individuals can have on elections and policymaking. This feeds the perception that the democratic process is being manipulated by those with significant financial resources and works to erode the confidence Minnesotans have in our electeds, our Republic's leadership and our elections.
3. **Legal and Ethical Concerns:** There are potential legal and ethical issues associated with offering money for political actions. While the offer may not directly violate laws, it raises questions about the ethical implications of using financial incentives to sway public opinion and political outcomes in this manner.
4. **Polarization and Distrust:** Such actions can contribute to increased polarization and distrust in the political system. When Minnesotans perceive our elections and political appointments, such as judges, are being influenced by money rather than merit, it erodes trust in democratic institutions and processes.

How SF1812 addresses bribery:

- **Enhanced Definitions and Scope:** The amendment broadens the definition of bribery to include more specific actions and scenarios. This ensures that various forms of bribery are clearly identified and covered under the law, enhancing the scope of anti-bribery regulations.
- **Stricter Penalties:** The amendment introduces stricter penalties for individuals found guilty of bribery. By increasing the severity of consequences, it aims to deter potential offenders and reinforce the seriousness of bribery offenses.

- **Improved Enforcement Mechanisms:** The amendment outlines improved enforcement mechanisms, including better coordination between law enforcement agencies and clearer procedures for investigating bribery cases. This can lead to more effective detection and prosecution of bribery.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** By expanding the definition and scope of bribery, the amendment promotes greater transparency and accountability in public and private sectors. It ensures that actions which might previously have been overlooked are now subject to scrutiny.
- **Public Trust:** Strengthening anti-bribery laws can help restore and maintain public trust in government and institutions. When citizens see that bribery is being actively combated, they are more likely to have confidence in the integrity of their leaders and systems.
- **Alignment with Federal Standards:** The amendment may align state bribery laws more closely with federal standards, ensuring consistency and facilitating cooperation between state and federal authorities in combating bribery.

Overall, the A-2 "delete all" amendment to SF1812 aims to create a more robust framework for addressing bribery, enhancing legal clarity, enforcement, and public trust.

SF1812 is a crucial step toward enhancing the integrity and effectiveness of our elections and safeguarding our state's democratic process. It ensures that the merit of candidates, not the influence of mega-rich individuals flooding super PAC money, determines the outcome. Offering money for votes or signatures undermines the democratic process and allows wealthy elites to bulldoze their agenda over the will of American voters.

SF1812 provides clear guidelines and accountability to protect the integrity of our Republic's democratic process. It safeguards our right to cast votes based on the merit of the candidates, free from undue financial influence.

Members, please vote "yes" on SF1812 to uphold the principles of fairness and integrity in our elections.

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