1	S.158
2	Introduced by Senator Lyons
3	Referred to Committee on
4	Date:
5	Subject: Elections; campaign finance; contribution limitations
6	Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to limit
7	contributions accepted by independent expenditure-only political committees
8	to \$5,000.00 per single source, political committee, or political party.
9 10	An act relating to independent expenditure-only political committee contribution limits
11	It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:
12	Sec. 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE
13	(a) It was the stated intention of the framers of the Constitution of the
14	United States of America that Congress should be "dependent on the people
15	alone" (James Madison or Alexander Hamilton, Federalist 52). That
16	dependency has evolved from a dependency on the people alone to a
17	dependency on those who spend excessively in elections through campaigns or
18	third-party groups—the result of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Citizens
19	United v. Federal Election Commission, 130 S.Ct. 876 (2010). Citizens United
20	removed restrictions on independent political spending, resulting in a legally

permissible, but undue, influence of powerful economic forces on ou	<u>r elections</u>
that has supplanted the will of the people by undermining our ability	to choose
our political leadership, write our own laws, and determine the fate o	<u>f our</u>
State.	
(b) Accompanying this spending is the equally problematic accep	tance of
contributions by these independent entities that, funneled through a n	iow-
sanctioned process, nevertheless results in the impairment of a candid	date—and
eventual officer—in the candidate's duty to not advantage the contrib	outor in a
manner inconsistent with that duty and the rights of Vermonters. The	e guise of
uncoordinated activities between a candidate and a monied interest fa	ails to
prevent this corruption.	
(c) While the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United invalid	<u>idates</u>
restrictions on independent expenditures, the issue of whether limitat	ions may
be placed on contributions to independent expenditure-only political	
committees remains unsettled law so long as the Second Circuit Cour	rt or the
United States Supreme Court have not directly decided on the matter	<u>.</u>
(d) It is indeed the purpose of this act to amend the State's campa	<u>ign</u>
finance laws to place limitations on contributions accepted by indepe	endent
expenditure-only political committees.	
(e) The State has a sufficiently important interest in limiting corru	uption in
our political system and asserts a substantial relation between the lim	itation of

1	contributions to independent expenditure-only political committees and the
2	anticorruption efforts of the State.
3	Sec. 2. 17 V.S.A. § 2901 is amended to read:
4	§ 2901. DEFINITIONS
5	As used in this chapter:
6	* * *
7	(4) "Contribution" means a payment, distribution, advance, deposit,
8	loan, or gift of money or anything of value, paid or promised to be paid for the
9	purpose of influencing an election, advocating a position on a public question,
10	or supporting or opposing one or more candidates in any election. As used in
11	this chapter, "contribution" shall does not include any of the following:
12	(A) a personal loan of money to a candidate from a lending
13	institution made in the ordinary course of business;
14	(B) services provided without compensation by individuals
15	volunteering their time on behalf of a candidate, political committee, or
16	political party;
17	(C) unreimbursed travel expenses paid for by an individual for
18	himself or herself themselves who volunteers personal services to a candidate;
19	(D) unreimbursed campaign-related travel expenses paid for by the
20	candidate or the candidate's spouse;

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1	(E) the use by a candidate or volunteer of his or her the candidate's or
2	volunteer's own personal property, including offices, telephones, computers,
3	and similar equipment;
4	(F) the use of a political party's offices, telephones, computers, and
5	similar equipment;
6	(G) the payment by a political party of the costs of preparation,
7	display, or mailing or other distribution of a party candidate listing;
8	(H) documents, in printed or electronic form, including party
9	platforms, single copies of issue papers, information pertaining to the
10	requirements of this title, lists of registered voters, and voter identification
11	information created, obtained, or maintained by a political party for the general
12	purpose of party building and provided to a candidate who is a member of that
13	party or to another political party;
14	(I) compensation paid by a political party to its employees whose job
15	responsibilities are not for the specific and exclusive benefit of a single
16	candidate in any election;
17	(J) compensation paid by a political party to its employees or
18	consultants for the purpose of providing assistance to another political party;
19	(K) campaign training sessions provided to three or more candidates;
20	(L) costs paid for by a political party in connection with a campaign

event at which three or more candidates are present; or

(M) activity or communication designed to encourage individuals to register to vote or to vote if that activity or communication does not mention or depict a clearly identified candidate.

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(10) "Independent expenditure-only political committee" means a political committee that conducts its activities entirely independent of candidates; does not give contributions to candidates, political committees, or political parties; does not make related expenditures; and is not closely related to a political party or to a political committee that makes contributions to candidates or makes related expenditures.

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(13) "Political committee" or "political action committee" means any formal or informal committee of two or more individuals or a corporation, labor organization, public interest group, or other entity, not including a political party, that accepts contributions of \$1,000.00 or more and makes expenditures of \$1,000.00 or more in any two-year general election cycle for the purpose of supporting or opposing one or more candidates, influencing an election, or advocating a position on a public question in any election, and includes an independent expenditure-only political committee and a legislative leadership political committee.

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1	(16) "Single source" means an individual, partnership, corporation,
2	association, labor organization, or any other organization or group of persons
3	that is not a political committee or political party.
4	* * *
5	Sec. 3. 17 V.S.A. § 2941 is amended to read:
6	§ 2941. LIMITATIONS OF CONTRIBUTIONS
7	(a) In any election cycle:
8	(1)(A) A candidate for State Representative or for local office shall not
9	accept contributions totaling more than:
10	(i) \$1,000.00 from a single source; or
11	(ii) \$1,000.00 from a political committee.
12	(B) Such a candidate may accept unlimited contributions from a
13	political party.
14	(2)(A) A candidate for State Senator or for county office shall not accept
15	contributions totaling more than:
16	(i) \$1,500.00 from a single source; or
17	(ii) \$1,500.00 from a political committee.
18	(B) Such a candidate may accept unlimited contributions from a
19	political party.

1	(3)(A) A candidate for the office of Governor, Lieutenant Governor,
2	Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Auditor of Accounts, or Attorney General
3	shall not accept contributions totaling more than:
4	(i) \$4,000.00 from a single source; or
5	(ii) \$4,000.00 from a political committee.
6	(B) Such a candidate may accept unlimited contributions from a
7	political party.
8	(4) A political committee shall not accept contributions totaling more
9	than:
10	(A) \$4,000.00 from a single source;
11	(B) \$4,000.00 from a political committee; or
12	(C) \$4,000.00 from a political party.
13	(5) A political party shall not accept contributions totaling more than:
14	(A) \$10,000.00 from a single source;
15	(B) \$10,000.00 from a political committee; or
16	(C) \$60,000.00 from a political party.
17	(6) An independent expenditure-only political committee shall not
18	accept contributions totaling more than:
19	(A) \$5,000.00 from a single source;
20	(B) \$5,000.00 from a political committee; or
21	(C) \$5,000.00 from a political party.

1	(b) A single source, political committee, or political party shall not
2	contribute more to a candidate, political committee, or political party than the
3	candidate, political committee, or political party is permitted to accept under
1	this section.
5	* * *
5	Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE
7	This act shall take effect on January 1, 2026.