

Senate Bill 18

Sponsored by Senator THATCHER (Presession filed.)

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**. The statement includes a measure digest written in compliance with applicable readability standards.

Digest: Boosts the punishment for certain people who commit voting law wrongs. (Flesch Readability Score: 64.9).

Increases the criminal and civil penalties for subsequent and intentional violations of specified election laws. Enhances the penalties if the person committing the violation is a public official acting in an official capacity.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

1
2 Relating to penalties for election offenses; creating new provisions; and amending ORS 260.993 and
3 260.995.

4 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

5 **SECTION 1.** ORS 260.993 is amended to read:

6 260.993. (1) The penalty for violation of ORS 260.532 is limited to that provided in ORS 260.532
7 (6) and (8).

8 (2) Violation of ORS 247.125 (1), 247.171 (5), 247.420 (2), 253.710, 260.402, 260.555, 260.558, 260.575,
9 260.645 or 260.665 (2) or (3) involving any action described in ORS 260.665 (2)(d) to (f) or 260.715 is
10 a Class C felony.

11 (3) **Except as provided in subsection (5) of this section, a violation of ORS 260.695 (5) is a**
12 **Class A misdemeanor.**

13 (4) **Except as provided in subsection (5) of this section, a violation of ORS 247.171 (6) is a**
14 **Class C misdemeanor.**

15 (5) **If a person has previously been found guilty of violating ORS 247.171 (6), 260.567,**
16 **260.569, 260.635, 260.675, 260.685, 260.695 (5) or 260.705, a subsequent and intentional violation**
17 **of ORS 247.171 (6), 260.567, 260.569, 260.635, 260.675, 260.685, 260.695 (5) or 260.705 is:**

18 (a) **Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this subsection, a Class C felony.**

19 (b) **A Class B felony, if the subsequent and intentional violation is committed by a public**
20 **official while acting in an official capacity.**

21 **SECTION 2.** ORS 260.995 is amended to read:

22 260.995. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, following an investigation under
23 ORS 260.345, the Secretary of State or Attorney General may impose a civil penalty not to exceed
24 \$1,000 for each violation of any provision of Oregon Revised Statutes relating to the conduct of any
25 election, any rule adopted by the secretary under ORS chapters 246 to 260 or any other matter
26 preliminary to or relating to an election, for which a civil penalty is not otherwise provided.

27 (2) The secretary or the Attorney General may impose a civil penalty not to exceed:

28 (a)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph, \$1,000 plus the amount con-
29 verted to personal use for each violation of ORS 260.407; **or**

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 (B) Two times the amount of the penalty provision for violating a nondisclosure agreement that
2 is contained within each nondisclosure agreement entered into in violation of ORS 260.407 or
3 260.413[;].

4 (b) 150 percent of the total cost of printing, transmitting or distributing a communication in
5 support of or in opposition to a clearly identified candidate if the disclosure requirements set forth
6 in ORS 260.266 are not met[; *or*].

7 (c) **Except as provided in paragraphs (e) to (g) of this subsection**, \$10,000 for each violation
8 of ORS 260.555, 260.558, 260.575, **260.685**, 260.695 (1) or (2) or 260.715 (1) or Article IV, section 1b,
9 of the Oregon Constitution.

10 (d) **\$25,000 for a second or subsequent intentional violation of ORS 260.569.**

11 (e) **\$50,000 for a second or subsequent intentional violation of ORS 260.555, 260.558,**
12 **260.567, 260.575, 260.635 or 260.695 (5).**

13 (f) **\$125,000 for a second or subsequent intentional violation of ORS 247.125 (1), 247.171 (5)**
14 **or (6), 247.420 (2), 253.710, 260.645 or 260.665 (2) or (3) involving any action described in ORS**
15 **260.665 (2)(d) to (f), 260.675, 260.705 or 260.715.**

16 (g) **Twice the amount of the allowed civil penalty for a second or subsequent intentional**
17 **violation of a statutory provision listed in this subsection if the violation is committed by a**
18 **public official while acting in an official capacity.**

19 (3) Except as otherwise provided by this section, civil penalties under this section shall be im-
20 posed as provided in ORS 183.745. In addition to the requirements of ORS 183.745, the notice shall
21 include:

22 (a) A statement of the authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held; and

23 (b) If the person is an agency, corporation or an unincorporated association, a statement that
24 such person must be represented by an attorney licensed in Oregon, unless the person is a political
25 committee which may be represented by any officer identified in the most recent statement of or-
26 ganization filed with the filing officer.

27 (4) A hearing on whether to impose a civil penalty and to consider circumstances in mitigation
28 shall be held by the secretary or Attorney General:

29 (a) Upon request of the person against whom the penalty may be assessed, if the request is made
30 not later than the 20th day after the service date on the notice sent under subsection (3) of this
31 section; or

32 (b) Upon the secretary's or Attorney General's own motion.

33 (5) The person against whom a penalty may be assessed need not appear in person at a hearing
34 held under this section, but instead may submit written testimony or other evidence, sworn to before
35 a notary public, to the secretary or Attorney General for entry in the hearing record. The testimony
36 or other evidence must be received by the secretary or Attorney General not later than three
37 business days before the day of the hearing and may be submitted electronically.

38 (6) All hearings under this section shall be held not later than 45 days after the deadline for the
39 person against whom the penalty may be assessed to request a hearing. However, if requested by
40 the person against whom the penalty may be assessed, a hearing under subsection (4) of this section
41 shall be held not later than 60 days after the deadline for the person against whom the penalty may
42 be assessed to request a hearing.

43 (7) The secretary or Attorney General shall issue an order not later than 90 days after a hearing
44 or after the deadline for requesting a hearing if no hearing is held.

45 (8) All penalties recovered under this section shall be paid into the State Treasury and credited

1 to the General Fund.

2 (9) In the case of a civil penalty imposed under this section for a violation of ORS 260.407, the
 3 person against whom the penalty is assessed:

4 (a) Is personally responsible for the payment of the civil penalty;

5 (b) Shall pay the civil penalty from personal funds of the person; and

6 (c) May not pay the civil penalty from contributions received by a candidate, a candidate's
 7 principal campaign committee, a political committee or a petition committee.

8 **SECTION 3.** ORS 260.995, as amended by section 20, chapter 9, Oregon Laws 2024, is amended
 9 to read:

10 260.995. (1) Except as provided in subsections (2) to (4) of this section, following an investigation
 11 under ORS 260.345, the Secretary of State or Attorney General may impose a civil penalty not to
 12 exceed \$1,000 for each violation of any provision of Oregon Revised Statutes relating to the conduct
 13 of any election, any rule adopted by the secretary under ORS chapters 246 to 260 or any other
 14 matter preliminary to or relating to an election, for which a civil penalty is not otherwise provided.

15 (2) The secretary or the Attorney General may impose a civil penalty not to exceed:

16 (a)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph, \$1,000 plus the amount con-
 17 verted to personal use for each violation of ORS 260.407; or

18 (B) Two times the amount of the penalty provision for violating a nondisclosure agreement that
 19 is contained within each nondisclosure agreement entered into in violation of ORS 260.407 or
 20 260.413[;].

21 (b) 150 percent of the total cost of printing, transmitting or distributing a communication in
 22 support of or in opposition to a clearly identified candidate if the disclosure requirements set forth
 23 in ORS 260.266 are not met[; or].

24 (c) **Except as provided in paragraphs (e) to (g) of this subsection,** \$10,000 for each violation
 25 of ORS 260.555, 260.558, 260.575, **260.685**, 260.695 (1) or (2) or 260.715 (1) or Article IV, section 1b,
 26 of the Oregon Constitution.

27 **(d) \$25,000 for a second or subsequent intentional violation of ORS 260.569.**

28 **(e) \$50,000 for a second or subsequent intentional violation of ORS 260.555, 260.558,**
 29 **260.567, 260.575, 260.635 or 260.695 (5).**

30 **(f) \$125,000 for a second or subsequent intentional violation of ORS 247.125 (1), 247.171 (5)**
 31 **or (6), 247.420 (2), 253.710, 260.645 or 260.665 (2) or (3) involving any action described in ORS**
 32 **260.665 (2)(d) to (f), 260.675, 260.705 or 260.715.**

33 **(g) Twice the amount of the allowed civil penalty for a second or subsequent intentional**
 34 **violation of a statutory provision listed in this subsection if the violation is committed by a**
 35 **public official while acting in an official capacity.**

36 (3)(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this subsection, the Secretary of State or
 37 the Attorney General may impose a civil penalty on the recipient of a contribution that exceeds the
 38 limits of section 4 or 5, chapter 9, Oregon Laws 2024. The amount of the civil penalty to be imposed
 39 shall be at least equal to the amount of the unlawful contribution.

40 (b) The recipient of a contribution that violates the contribution limits of section 4 or 5, chapter
 41 9, Oregon Laws 2024, may remedy the violation by refunding to the contributor an amount that
 42 renders the contribution in compliance with applicable contribution limits under section 4 or 5,
 43 chapter 9, Oregon Laws 2024. For this paragraph to apply, the refund must be made to the contrib-
 44 utor within 14 days of receipt of the unlawful contribution.

45 (c) If paragraph (b) of this subsection does not apply, the recipient of a contribution that violates

1 the contribution limits of section 4 or 5, chapter 9, Oregon Laws 2024, may reduce the penalty oth-
2 erwise applicable under this subsection by 50 percent, if the recipient refunds to the contributor an
3 amount that renders the contribution in compliance with section 4 or 5, chapter 9, Oregon Laws
4 2024, within 14 days of the date the recipient reasonably should have known that the violation oc-
5 curred.

6 (d) The Secretary of State shall adopt rules under this subsection establishing enhanced penal-
7 ties for successive knowing and willful violations of the contribution limit provisions of section 4
8 or 5, chapter 9, Oregon Laws 2024.

9 (4)(a) The Secretary of State or the Attorney General may impose a civil penalty on a person
10 subject to the reporting requirements of section 13, chapter 9, Oregon Laws 2024, and that is vio-
11 lating those requirements. The penalty to be imposed shall be not less than one-tenth of, nor more
12 than four times, the total amount of contribution or expenditure that was not properly disclosed or
13 disclaimed.

14 (b) The Secretary of State shall adopt rules under this subsection establishing enhanced penal-
15 ties for successive knowing and willful violations of the disclosure provisions of section 13, chapter
16 9, Oregon Laws 2024.

17 (5) Except as otherwise provided by this section, civil penalties under this section shall be im-
18 posed as provided in ORS 183.745. In addition to the requirements of ORS 183.745, the notice shall
19 include:

20 (a) A statement of the authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held; and

21 (b) If the person is an agency, corporation or an unincorporated association, a statement that
22 such person must be represented by an attorney licensed in Oregon, unless the person is a political
23 committee which may be represented by any officer identified in the most recent statement of or-
24 ganization filed with the filing officer.

25 (6) A hearing on whether to impose a civil penalty and to consider circumstances in mitigation
26 shall be held by the secretary or Attorney General:

27 (a) Upon request of the person against whom the penalty may be assessed, if the request is made
28 not later than the 20th day after the service date on the notice sent under subsection (5) of this
29 section; or

30 (b) Upon the secretary's or Attorney General's own motion.

31 (7) The person against whom a penalty may be assessed need not appear in person at a hearing
32 held under this section, but instead may submit written testimony or other evidence, sworn to before
33 a notary public, to the secretary or Attorney General for entry in the hearing record. The testimony
34 or other evidence must be received by the secretary or Attorney General not later than three
35 business days before the day of the hearing and may be submitted electronically.

36 (8) All hearings under this section shall be held not later than 45 days after the deadline for the
37 person against whom the penalty may be assessed to request a hearing. However, if requested by
38 the person against whom the penalty may be assessed, a hearing under subsection (6) of this section
39 shall be held not later than 60 days after the deadline for the person against whom the penalty may
40 be assessed to request a hearing.

41 (9) The secretary or Attorney General shall issue an order not later than 90 days after a hearing
42 or after the deadline for requesting a hearing if no hearing is held.

43 (10) All penalties recovered under this section shall be paid into the State Treasury and credited
44 to the General Fund.

45 (11) In the case of a civil penalty imposed under this section for a violation of ORS 260.407, the

1 person against whom the penalty is assessed:

2 (a) Is personally responsible for the payment of the civil penalty;

3 (b) Shall pay the civil penalty from personal funds of the person; and

4 (c) May not pay the civil penalty from contributions received by a candidate, a candidate's
5 principal campaign committee, a political committee or a petition committee.

6 **SECTION 4. The amendments to ORS 260.993 and 260.995 by sections 1 to 3 of this 2025**
7 **Act apply to election law violations that occur on or after the effective date of this 2025 Act.**

8
