

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1031, enabling candidates for state office to use campaign funds to pay for security measures.

Hearing Date: March 17, 2026

Time Opened: 10:01 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:15 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Lang, Rochefort, Perkins Kwoka and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill enables candidates for state office and state office holders to use campaign funds to pay for security measures.

Sponsors:

Rep. W. Thomas

Rep. A. Murray

Rep. Oppel

Rep. Lane

Rep. Telerski

Sen. Reardon

Who supports the bill: Rep. Wendy Thomas, Rep. Connie Lane, Cory Stone, Taylor Criddle, Stephanie Osborne, Richard Osborne, Janet Lucas, Sheila Donahue, Nancy Donahue, Jake Braunger

Who opposes the bill: Christina Smith

Summary of testimony presented:

Rep. Wendy Thomas, Hillsborough - District 12

- This would allow candidates for state office to use some campaign funds to pay for security measures.
- In the original bill, there was a cap of \$3000. This was put into place to help prevent abuse of the funds. The House raised concerns that the Governor's race and possibly the Senate races might need higher limits, so they removed the cap.
- Rep. Thomas recommended restoring the cap.
- This was primarily intended for House races so the committee could clarify that this bill applies solely to House races.

Senator Long asked how a candidate would show that they used the funds for their own security.

Rep Thomas replied that she was swatted this summer. There are now cameras in her car, which is a reasonable expense. Cameras at her home are also a reasonable expense.

Senator Long followed up and asked whether this would continue through their service as a representative if they are elected.

Rep. Thomas stated that it would cover the campaign and continue if elected.

Senator Rochefort asked whether she would consider firearms and body armor to be a reasonable expense.

Rep. Thomas stated that the question came up in the House and noted that those items aren't specifically listed, and that the decision would be left to the Secretary of State. She also said that one consideration when the \$3000 cap was added to the bill was concern that candidates might amass many weapons in the name of protection.

Senator Rochefort followed up and said that he doesn't think it would be prohibited the way the bill is written.

Rep. Thomas said it would be up to the Secretary of State (SOS) to make that decision and that there is a good argument for including that.

Senator Gray said on line 13 that it appears all of those things would be permitted under the bill's current wording.

Rep. Thomas said she agrees it doesn't prohibit that, but she believes it is up to the SOS.

Senator Gray said that, as he reads the bill, the language is already in it, so it wouldn't be up to the SOS.

Rep. Thomas said she agreed and said that this does not prohibit that.

Representative Connie Lane, Merrimack - District 16

- This bill was introduced due to rising political violence.
- Her family is concerned about her safety. They don't want her to use her Representative license plate, and she only wears my name tag at the State House or Granite Place.
- All legislators are targets.
- A study by American University found a 40% increase of violence in the first six months of 2025 compared to the first six months of 2024, involving politicians.

- Rep. Lane noted that the assassinations of the Minnesota Speaker of the House, Melissa Hortman, and Charlie Kirk are probably the most notable cases of recent violence against political figures.
- This year, there have been numerous threats against legislators in the House.

Senator Long asked where she stands on placing a cap on the amount of funds that can be used.

Rep. Lane said she went against the cap because it was clear that members of the House committee did not want a cap, so they removed it. The argument was that some races would need more money.

Senator Lang pointed out that the key is on line 12, where it states: “such security measures include, but are not limited to:” followed by some examples, and he questioned whether he was correct in saying that the list is non-exhaustive.

Rep. Lane said yes, the list in the bill is a non-exhaustive list.

Senator Gray said he would include training with the devices.

Rep. Lane said if the committee would like to add that, then she would agree.

Senator Gray said it seems like a good idea for people to receive training on the devices they purchase, if they choose to do so.