

Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

Ben Mickens 271-1403

SB 570, relative to the legislative ethics committee and legislative ethics.

Hearing Date: January 28, 2026

Time Opened: 9:18 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:31 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gannon, Altschiller, Reardon and Pearl

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator McGough

Bill Analysis: This bill amends definitions related to determining conflicts of interests for legislators.

Sponsors:

Sen. Carson

Sen. Ward

Who supports the bill: Senator Sharon Carson, Senator Ruth Ward

Who opposes the bill: Daniel Richardson.

Who is neutral on the bill: Former Senator Ned Gordon.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Sharon Carson

- This is an attempt to clarify the statute surrounding the legislative ethics committee. We want to provide good structure and set standards. There is continued work that needs to be done and we will return with an amendment.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None.

Neutral Information Presented:

Former Senator Ned Gordon

- I am the Chair of the Legislative Ethics committee; however, I am not representing the committee and am only representing myself.

- The bill, as it stands, was voted down last time it was presented, and it does need work.
- The bill tries to define “direct benefit” and “direct detriment.”
- The definitions provided may cause more ambiguity than we have currently.
- We have been working hard on how to define “direct benefit” in the sense of immediacy, and not by virtue of luck or chance.
- The bill also changes the definition of financial interest
- This may dilute the recusal provisions, which could be an issue. It may even be better to repeal the existing provisions rather than adopt these changes.
- If there were to be a change in the recusal law, it would be better to allow senators to speak in committee when there is a conflict, provided that the Senator identify their conflict before speaking.
- Recusal rules have been in place for a year, and there has not yet been a violation found.

Senator Pearl asked if there was room to work on amending this bill.

Former Senator Gordon stated that there was and has great respect for the sponsor.

Senator Reardon asked about further clarity needed in the statute, specifically on the differences between a legislator and a member of their household’s employer vs a legislator who is employed.

Former Senator Gordon stated that the public certainly strongly supports recusal provisions. Over time the recusal bill will likely come to be appreciated.