

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

**FILE NUMBER:** H.F. 208  
**Version:** As introduced

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**Authors:** Gruenhagen and others

**Subject:** Use of public funds in ballot question campaigns

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### Overview

This bill restricts the use of public funds and other public resources for purposes of supporting or opposing a ballot question that is subject to voter approval at an election. The bill applies to the secretary of state, and other public officials.

#### Section

- 1 Use of public funds; ballot questions (secretary of state).** Prohibits the secretary of state from using any public funds or public resource for the purpose of promoting or defeating a ballot question, at any time. The secretary is also prohibited from using the “inherent prestige” of the office in a manner that has the effect of promoting or defeating a ballot question.

These prohibitions apply both during legislative debate over whether to place a question on the ballot, and after a question has been approved for submission to the voters.

The use of public funds to provide impartial and balanced information would be permitted.

All types of public funds, regardless of source or purpose, would be subject to the requirements of this section.
- 2 Use of public funds; ballot questions (public officials).** Prohibits public officials from using any public funds or public resources for the purpose of promoting or defeating a ballot question.

A “public official” is a defined term in statute. High profile “public officials” include (among others): legislators; executive branch constitutional officers; state agency commissioners, deputies, and assistants; judges; county commissioners; and individuals with

**Section**

authority over administrative rules. A number of other specific positions constituting a “public official” is detailed in statute.

Paragraph (b) provides that the restriction in this section only applies after enactment of a legislative act that places a question on the ballot at an election.

Paragraph (c) provides that all types of public funds, regardless of source or purpose, would be subject to the requirements of this section.

Because this section is coded in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 10A, enforcement actions would be conducted by the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board.