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As the 20th century draws to a close, campaign finance reform is enjoying somewhat of a renaissance. However; this issue is not new to Nevada politics.

During the meteoric reign of the Silver Party in the early 1900s, major accomplishments were rare and somewhat insignificant; however; during the 17th Session of the Legislature in 1895, the most comprehensive political reform and regulatory act was adopted. Entitled "An act to promote the purity of elections by regulating the conduct thereof, and to support the privilege of free suffrage by prohibiting certain acts and practices in relation thereto, and providing the punishment thereof," this law by comparison with Nevada's current Campaign Practices Act was quite rigid and effective.

For example, under the "Purity of Election Law" a candidate had to have five persons who would accept in an affidavit that they would be responsible for the financing of the individual's campaign. Today campaign managers have replaced finance committees in practice and are no longer required by law, and most candidates administer their own finances during their campaigns. Under the Silver Party's "Purity" law, extensive reports naming amounts and contributors were mandatory and neglect was punishable not only by misdemeanor penalties but forfeiture of office upon conviction. If it could be established that a candidate's reports were indeed lacking prior to the issuance of an election certificate, the law provided that no certificate was to be issued. Exact detail in the accounting of all expenditures and contributions was specifically provided for in this act. Today, a candidate need only be specific about those contributions in excess of \$100 and penalties for noncompliance are not specifically stated.

An example of the minute details demanded by the "Purity" law is found in section 10 of the act: "Every bill, placard, poster, pamphlet or other printed matter having reference to an election or to any candidate, shall bear upon the face thereof the name and address of the printer and publisher thereof, and no payment thereof shall be made or allowed unless such address is so printed."

Prohibitions and penalties were specifically detailed throughout the act. It was unlawful for a

person or through another person to promise a certain appointment of office, present gifts, receive gifts, advance money, to pay room and board, to aid in the evasion of arrest, or to induce another to vote for any particular person.

Limitations on the spending of campaign funds included in the "Purity of Election Law" suggest a certain naive frugality among the Silver Party legislators. "If the term of office for which the person is a candidate be for two years or less, five per cent of the amount of one year's salary of the office; if the term be for more than two years and not more than four years, four per cent of the amount of one year's salary for the office; if the term be more than four years, three per cent of the amount of one year's salary of the office." Computing spending limitations for today's candidates based upon the "Purity" law and modern salaries, a candidate for governor would be permitted to spend only \$2,000. With no modern campaign spending limitations, the sum of \$1,000,000 is being suggested as a minimum amount necessary to secure the governor's chair in 1986. Using the same formula, a legislative candidate for the Assembly would be restricted to a mere \$240 for his campaign.

The fate of the "Purity of Election" Act was much the same as that of the Silver Party. After a modest amendment to raise the spending limitations in 1897, the legislature during the 19th Session in 1899 passed the following:

"An Act of the Legislature of the State of Nevada entitled An Act to promote the purity of elections by regulating the conduct thereof and to support the privilege of free suffrage by prohibiting certain acts and practices in relation thereto and providing for the punishment thereof approved March 16, 1895, is hereby repealed." (Approved March 21, 1899.)

In 1975, campaign contribution and expense reporting laws were added to the Nevada Revised Statutes. Secretary of State Swackhamer became responsible for designing the campaign reporting forms and administering the Nevada Campaign Practices Act, just as his office had always administered election laws. Essentially, the campaign laws require that candidates report how they raise and spend money during a campaign; three reports are required. The law requires that candidates disclose the name and address of persons who contribute in excess of \$500 (the second highest reporting threshold in the nation). Later regulations, adopted in 1993, extended this disclosure requirement to include the name and address of persons paid more than \$500 in campaign expenses. Attempts to lower the reporting thresholds and more closely regulate the campaign spending of political parties and legislative caucuses have met with defeat. Constitutional amendments resulting from a citizens' initiative petition and sweeping legislative reform spearheaded by Secretary of State Dean Heller in 1997 took the issue further. Reporting thresholds were lowered to \$100, political party activities were

regulated, and new caps were established.

Among other things, Chapter 294A now:

1. Limits the amount of contributions that may be made to a candidate by a single contributor, association, business, or other entity;
2. Requires detailed reporting of campaign contributions and expenses;
3. Provides for the registration of political action committees;
4. Establishes procedures to be followed by a committee for the recall of a public officer;
5. Sets forth a Code of Fair Campaign Practices, which may be subscribed to by candidates; and
6. Prohibits state legislators, the governor or governor-elect, and the lieutenant governor or lieutenant governor-elect from accepting campaign contributions during the period which begins 30 days before the start of a regular legislative session and ends 30 days after its final adjournment.