

2013 SENATE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

SB 2276

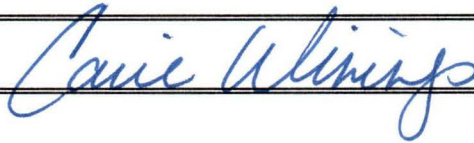
2013 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
Missouri River Room, State Capitol

SB 2276
01/31/2013
Job Number 18076

Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature



Minutes:

Chairman Dever: Opened the hearing on SB 2276.

Senator Sinner, District 46: See Attachment #1 for testimony as sponsor and in support of the bill.

(4:38) Senator Nelson: I question the definition on "employer". As you well know, I am a national president of an organization and I travel. It is not an employer because it is a volunteer organization. I do get reimbursed for expenses. I am wondering if that is included under the broad definition of employer.

Senator Sinner: I am open for an amendment that would allow that exemption to be included.

Senator Schaible: Can you explain exactly what trips? Are these just legislative trips that we have to ask for permission to? Or is this every trip that I would make in a year?

Senator Sinner: Any trip is that paid for by someone else that greater than \$500 and is paid for someone other than the parties that are listed in the bill, and I am open to the exemption that Senator Nelson offered. We are public officials, we are subject to influence by these folks who pay for these trips, and in my humble opinion it does not matter whether we believe we are influenced or not. The fact that we take these trips suggests that we are subject to influence.

Senator Cook: (Gives a personal experience) There was not an expense to us, is that something that you would say that I have to report there?

Senator Sinner: Under this bill you would have to ask the company your share of those expenses that they paid and you would have to report it. And you could also describe why you took that trip and that gives you clearance on that.

Senator Cook: I have always had the policy of being cautious. I had a situation that I almost took a trip that would have later caused me trouble. It was advised to me to run any trips contemplated by someone. Yes, we had one legislator that went on some gambling junkets and some constituent complains and I still don't know if it is a great big problem.

Senator Sinner: I will say that I took this bill to one other Senator and he said he could not sign on to the bill because he just took a trip and it cost the company \$2500 and he did not want to report it.

Chairman Dever: Who's employer? His?

Senator Sinner: Obviously it was not his company because it would have been exempt in this bill.

Chairman Dever: There are certainly some interesting implications here. Every year the Lignite Energy Council flies airplanes around the state and brings people to Beulah to do the tour and I don't think anyone sees anything inappropriate about that but I do not have a clue what it costs.

Senator Nelson: Don't they have to claim that on their pac reports?

Senator Cook: (Gives examples of trips taken) I have nothing to hide.

Senator Sinner: In the case of riding in the Governor's airplane, that would have been paid for by a government agency. In the case of these other things; let's face it; these guys are paying for our expenses. This constitutes an interest and whether we like it or not, the

public sees this and it creates a problem. I say in all due respect to everyone's reporting requirements; I think this should be totally available and we should have to justify what we are doing and why we are doing it. If you can, it is not a problem.

Chairman Dever: You mentioned making the amendment annually. Did you have language? Or maybe line 12 to say annually instead of within thirty days.

Senator Sinner: When I talked to people about this bill they suggested that when they make their annual report on their contributions to add a page to report the trips then.

Chairman Dever: Discussed a couple of potential issues with this. We will have appropriate discussion on this. Closed hearing on SB 2276.

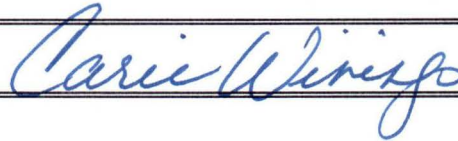
2013 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
Missouri River Room, State Capitol

SB 2276
02/21/2013
Job Number 19362

Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature



Minutes:

Chairman Dever: Opened SB 2276 for committee discussion.

Senator Cook: Moved a Do Not Pass.

Vice Chairman Berry: Seconded.

Chairman Dever: Any discussion?

Senator Marcellais: I am going to have to vote "no" to the Do Not Pass because I introduced this bill last session.

A Roll Call Vote Was Taken: 5 yeas, 2 nays, 0 absent.

Chairman Dever: Carrier.

Date: 2/21
 Roll Call Vote #: 1

2013 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE
 ROLL CALL VOTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 2274

Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Check here for Conference Committee

Legislative Council Amendment Number _____

Action Taken: Do Pass Do Not Pass Amended Adopt Amendment
 Rerefer to Appropriations Reconsider

Motion Made By Senator Cook Seconded By Senator Berry

Senators	Yes	No	Senator	Yes	No
Chariman Dick Dever	✓		Senator Carolyn Nelson		✓
Vice Chairman Spencer Berry	✓		Senator Richard Marcellais		✓
Senator Dwight Cook	✓				
Senator Donald Schaible	✓				
Senator Nicole Poolman	✓				

Total (Yes) 5 No 2

Absent 0

Floor Assignment Senator Dever

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2276: Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Dever, Chairman)
recommends **DO NOT PASS** (5 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING).
SB 2276 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

2013 TESTIMONY

SB 2276


Testimony of SB 2276
Senator George Sinner

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am George Sinner, Senator from District 46 in Fargo.

I introduced Senate Bill 2276 at the request of a constituent in District 46. It was brought to my attention during the recent campaign that one candidate for office had taken several trips over the past few years at the expense of the gaming industry. Some of these trips were to exotic resort locations including Antigua, the Bahamas, and Costa Rica; the details of which are secret to the public.


I believe that our elected officials should be held to the very highest of standards, meaning that there should not even be the suggestion of impropriety or misconduct. I am confident that you would agree with me. And there is certainly at least a question of impropriety with these trips as there is no reporting whatsoever.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the purpose of this bill is to create transparency for members of the legislature and allow them to provide full justification of the reasons for these travels. Thus, I submit to you...if a member of this body is afraid to discuss the purposes of these paid-for trips then I submit to you that maybe the paid-for travel should not have been accepted to begin with. This bill does, however, require reporting only those trips greater than \$500 and exempts all trips paid for by the legislator's employer, any family member, or any government agency.



In my profession, in order to ensure full transparency, all employees must sign a code of ethics. With that code of ethics that is acknowledged annually we must all report any and all gifts from clients that have a value greater than \$25.

Opponents might rise to say that this is an inconvenience for the legislator who must report these trips per the reporting requirements in the bill. Well, as the bill's prime sponsor, I offer to accept a friendly amendment to make the reporting annually when we report our annual contributions. And make it a part of the same form, how much easier could that be? One report, once per year.



Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we live in a time of nearly total distrust of elected officials as noted by the recently reported 10% approval rating for Congress. That said, we must make every effort to enhance the image and honor of the legislative branch of government. This bill furthers the credibility and brings increased honor to the members of these legislative bodies. With that, I respectfully request that this committee give this bill a unanimous Do-Pass. Thank you.

