

Seeking an end to pay-for-play politics in state

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BLOOMINGTON - Illinois desperately needs to reform its campaign financing system, according to State Sen. Bill Brady.

Brady, a Bloomington Republican, would like to see Illinois rules mirror the more restrictive federal regulations that place an approximate \$2,000 limit on individual contributions and a \$5,000 limit on political action committee contributions to candidates.

Illinois has no limits.

"The federal rules go toward eliminating incentive for pay-for-play politics," said Brady, who has an unique perspective on campaign financing reform because he ran for Congress several years ago under the federal rules and for Illinois governor last year under state rules.

"A government elected under the federal rules is better for the people," he said.

With that in mind, Brady last year proposed adopting Illinois rules that would mimic federal rules - a proposal that stalled, but which he intends to reintroduce this year.

"The problem is how to implement it in a fair way," said Brady, adding that it could be started by picking an election cycle and "starting from zero," adding, the more stringent federal guidelines "seem to work fine nationally."

Besides discouraging pay for play, the more restrictive federal rules "require politicians to build a broader base of support," said Brady.

Because Illinois doesn't place limits on contributions, a candidate raising millions can dole out unused funds to other candidates of his choice.

"This is one of the problems we have in government, the political influence of a few," Brady said.

Another argument for adopting the federal standards is consistency between federal and state elections, said Brady, adding said if Illinois would adopt campaign limits similar to federal law, it would help counteract the popular image of Illinois as a not-ready-for-reform state.

However, Brady predicted little will change in Illinois "until we have leaders who put the public's better interest ahead of their own."

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