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For Immediate Release

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Representative Kane opposes effort to change appointment process for state OCPF director

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury, is opposing attempts to alter the make-up of the commission responsible for selecting the director of the state’s Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF), saying the proposed changes will unfairly limit or exclude minority party participation.

Current law requires the OCPF director to be nominated by a unanimous vote of a four-member commission comprised of the state chairpersons of the two leading political parties, the Secretary of State, and the dean of a Massachusetts law school appointed by the Governor. A bill released by the House Committee on Ways and Means on September 25 would expand the commission to five members, require a four-fifths vote to approve a director, and drop the requirement that the Democratic and Republican parties’ state chairs serve as members.

“I often hear from members of both parties that Washington should operate more like Massachusetts, but it seems like Massachusetts is operating just like Washington when we pass bills like this,” said House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading). “The existing process has worked well for almost half a century, so what exactly is the problem we’re trying to fix? This is nothing more than a solution in search of a problem.”

Representative Kane expressed support for the underlying bill – House Bill 4087, An Act relative to campaign finance – which would more closely align the campaign finance reporting requirements of state legislators with those holding statewide elected office by requiring legislative candidates to designate a bank as a depository for their campaign finance funds. But she said the inclusion of the OCPF commission changes represents a “poison pill” that led her to vote against the bill, after several attempts to amend the language failed.

House Bill 4087 revises the commission membership to include the Governor, the Attorney General, and the Secretary of State, who will be responsible for choosing the remaining two members by a majority vote. One of the members must be an elected municipal official and one must be an elected county official.

The bill also stipulates that no more than three commissioners can be from the same political party. Representative Kane said this is problematic because it could create a future scenario

where, for example, three of the commissioners are Democrats, two are unenrolled, and none are Republicans.

During House floor debate, Representative Kane supported a series of amendments designed to ensure that neither of the state's major political parties are excluded from the process. The amendments included proposals to:

- retain the existing commission make-up;
- continue to require a unanimous vote of the commission when selecting an OCPF director; and
- require that both leading political parties be represented by at least one commissioner.

Representative Kane also supported a proposed amendment requiring commissioners to undergo a background check prior to their appointment, and prohibiting anyone convicted of a felony from serving on the commission.

The bill, which was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 121-35, now heads to the Senate for further action.

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