



NEWS RELEASE

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Rep. Michelle Ugenti (R-Dist. 23)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REPRESENTATIVE UGENTI INTRODUCES BILL TO DEFEND FREE SPEECH

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX (Fri., February 13, 2015) – Representative Michelle Ugenti introduced legislation this week amending and clarifying Arizona’s statutory definition of “political committee”. House Bill 2649 defines who is considered a political committee in order to avoid capturing individuals who come together to simply express their First Amendment rights.

This issue arose when Dina Galassini, a Fountain Hills resident and constituent of Representative Ugenti, was informed by the Town of Fountain Hills that she needed to register as a political committee after organizing a protest opposing a local bond measure during the 2010 election. On December 5, 2014, a federal judge declared Arizona’s definition of political committee “vague, overbroad, and consequently unconstitutional in violation of the First Amendment.” In *Galassini v. Town of Fountain Hills*, Senior District Judge James Teilborg of the United States District Court for the District of Arizona, relied on his prior determination finding A.R.S. §16-901(19) unconstitutional.

House Bill 2649 replaces the unconstitutional definition, which is a single, 183-word sentence, and replaces it by clarifying which types of organizations and activities constitute a political committee. The new definition specifies an association or combination of persons does not qualify as a political committee unless it raises or spends at least \$500 and is organized or conducted for the primary purpose of influencing the result of an election.

“It is important to maintain a balance for ordinary citizens to have the right to express political speech without interference from the government while also allowing for transparency and enforcement against formal political committees,” said Representative Ugenti. “In light of Justice Teilborg’s ruling determining Arizona’s definition as vague and overbroad, I appreciate the efforts and input I have received from many stakeholders in developing a solution that maintains a proper balance.”

“We are pleased to be a part of the process to provide greater transparency and clarity when it comes to political committees,” said Secretary Reagan. “We applaud Representative Ugenti and the legislature for this important step forward.”

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