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Concern for HB 1064

House Bill 1064 (HB 1064), introduced in the 103rd General Assembly of Missouri, amends *section 115.357* of the Revised Statutes of Missouri (RSMo) concerning candidate filing fees. This legislation introduces a significant change that limits the ability of political parties to block candidates from running in primary elections, particularly those whose views may diverge from the majority of party members or the official party platform. Below is a summary of how HB 1064 achieves this and its potential effects on party vetting efforts, such as those described at repaccmo.com. The key information is primarily located in the newly added *subsection 3 of section 115.357* on *page 2, lines 17-20* of the bill.

How HB 1064 Prevents Political Parties from Blocking Candidates

Under the current law (*section 115.357, RSMo, before amendment*), candidates seeking nomination for federal, state, or county offices under a political party's ticket must pay a filing fee to the treasurer of the state or county committee of that party. The fee amounts vary by office:

- \$500 for statewide office or U.S. Senator,
- \$300 for a U.S. Representative, circuit judge, or state senator,
- \$150 for state representative,
- \$100 for county office.

These fees are either paid directly to the party committee treasurer (for candidates filing with the Secretary of State) or submitted to the official accepting the candidate's declaration of candidacy (usually their local county clerk,) who then forwards the fee to the party committee (see *page 1, lines 11-16*). Although the existing law does not explicitly grant the party the authority to reject a candidate's filing fee, the fact that the fee is paid to the party's treasurer suggests that, in practice, parties may have had some discretion to influence who can run by accepting or rejecting these payments.

HB 1064 introduces a new provision in *subsection 3 (page 2, lines 17-20)*, which states:

"The treasurer of the county central committee shall not reject the filing fee from a candidate who has been affiliated, as described in section 115.155, with the party for which he or she seeks to declare candidacy for at least twenty-six weeks prior to the last Tuesday in February immediately preceding the primary election."

This provision mandates that the county central committee treasurer *must accept* the filing fee from any candidate who:

1. Has been affiliated with the party (as defined by *section 115.155*, likely referring to registration or membership) for at least 26 weeks (approximately six months),
2. Meets this affiliation requirement by the last Tuesday in February before the primary election, typically held in August in Missouri.

By explicitly prohibiting the rejection of the filing fee for candidates meeting this affiliation threshold, HB 1064 removes a potential mechanism that parties could use to block candidates whose views do not align with the party's majority or platform. For example:

- A candidate who has been a party member for the required period but holds unconventional or dissenting opinions can still pay the fee and secure a spot in the primary election.
- The party cannot use fee rejection as a gatekeeping tool to exclude such candidates, potentially allowing a candidate with radically different views from the party or a candidate whose views align with the opposing party but lives in a district unlikely to support a candidate from a party whom they are philosophically aligned.

To illustrate the timeline:

- Missouri primaries typically occur in early August (e.g., *August 2024*).
- The last Tuesday in February 2026 would be around February 24th.
- Twenty-six weeks (*about six months*) before that date is roughly late August 2026.
- Thus, a candidate must have been affiliated with the party since at least late August of the previous year—approximately one year before the primary—to qualify under this provision.

Impact on Party Vetting Efforts (e.g., *REPACCMO*)

The conservative group, the Republican Association of Central Committees of MO (REPACCMO), developed a vetting process in which the party evaluates candidates based on their alignment with party values, platform, or leadership preferences to provide Republican Voters some insurance that candidates running as Republicans truly help conservative views. While HB 1064 does not explicitly eliminate such vetting processes, it removes the key enforcement mechanism available to them.

Key effects include:

1. Reduced Gatekeeping Power:

- Under the current law, if a party could refuse a filing fee (*whether explicitly or through informal influence*), it might prevent an unvetted or unendorsed candidate from running. HB 1064's subsection 3 eliminates this option for candidates meeting the 26-week affiliation requirement, ensuring they can enter the primary even if they fail the party's vetting process.

2. Shift in Vetting Focus:

- Vetting efforts, such as those at the Republican Association of Central Committees of MO, can still occur to identify and promote candidates who align with the party's goals. However, their influence shifts from barring candidates to persuading voters. The party can endorse preferred candidates, provide resources, or campaign against those they oppose, but they cannot outright block ballot access.

Conclusion

From the perspective of a political party, HB 1064 threatens their ability to protect voters from candidates who might deceive them by running under their banner without truly sharing their values. This bill, specifically under *subsection 3 of section 115.357 (page 2, lines 17-20)*, forces them to accept filing fees from any candidate affiliated with their party for at least 26 weeks before the primary, regardless of whether their views align with the party platform. This change strips the party of its right to reject candidates who don't represent its core beliefs, leaving it powerless to stop individuals who could exploit the party brand to mislead voters. We believe this undermines a political party's ability to maintain a clear, consistent message and ensure that only genuine representatives of a party appear on the ballot. For efforts like those of the Republican Association of Central Committees of MO that aim to inform voters, HB 1064 shifts the burden from excluding deceptive candidates to persuading voters after the fact. This weaker safeguard risks confusing the electorate and diluting a party's integrity in Missouri's primary elections.

ACT4MO.ORG calls on the Missouri House to reject HB 1064!