

Legislature OKs campaign-gift limits panned by many

By [Tom Kacich](#)

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SPRINGFIELD – Although some lawmakers and members of good government groups called it a sham, the Illinois House on Sunday night approved a campaign finance bill pushed by House Speaker Michael Madigan and his Democratic leadership.

The bill now goes to Gov. Pat Quinn, who said last week that he supported the measure and would sign it.

The bill, which would not be effective until after the November 2010 election, would restrict campaign contributions from individuals to \$5,000 a year. Donations from political actions committees and unions and business groups would be capped at \$10,000 annually. But legislative leaders, like Madigan, would be allowed to contribute as much as \$90,000 a year to a candidate's campaign fund.

There would also be no restrictions on so-called "in-kind" contributions, such as subsidies for a candidate's radio and television commercials and for paid staff.

The legislation was approved, 64-46, with eight representatives voting "present." Among area representatives, only Urbana Democrat Naomi Jakobsson voted yes.

Some of Madigan's Democratic colleagues, as well as Republicans, said the bill would not bring true reform to Illinois politics.

"This is not campaign finance reform," said Rep. Bill Black, R-Danville. "We all know it. We all can do better."

Rep. John Fritchey, a Chicago Democrat who was one of the most outspoken critics of former Gov. Rod Blagojevich, said the bill "does not accomplish what it purports to do. It's not the best we can do."

Numerous reform groups, including a commission appointed earlier this year by Gov. Quinn, have criticized the bill and suggested that it could be easily improved.

But Madigan called the measure "a first step," and denied that it would unfairly advantage incumbents.

The campaign finance law is part of a package of bills that Madigan has sponsored this spring in the aftermath of the arrest and impeachment of Blagojevich.

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