



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION CONTINUES TO OPPOSE AD RESTRICTIONS IN AMENDED BILL 42

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association is giving a failing grade to the Liberal government's amendments to Bill 42's third party advertising restrictions that impose limits on advertising before and during an election campaign. The *Election Amendment Act* was amended today to reduce the gag period to 60 days (from 120 days) before an election and the 28 day election period. The advertising spending limits for non parties of \$3,000 per electoral district and \$150,000 overall during these periods remain the same. The amount of the limit for political parties in the 60 days has been halved from \$2.2 million to \$1.1 million.

There are currently no legal restrictions on the amounts that third parties can spend on advertising to promote a particular issue, candidate or party.

BCCLA President Rob Holmes: "The Liberal government's tinkering does nothing to make this legislation less repugnant. We are also concerned about the timing of this bill. Either the Liberals have deliberately waited to introduce the bill just before the next election to tie the hands of third parties in the next election or they have acted prematurely without adequate deliberation. Either way, this bill is a dark mark on the government and demonstrates a profound disrespect for the democratic process."

Given the cost of advertising in major radio, TV and print media, the advertising restrictions would effectively prevent any individual or group from conducting any effective advertising campaign regarding the election. In the last provincial election, the BC Teachers Federation spent \$1.55 million on ads, the Hospital Employees Union spent \$550,000 and the B.C. Nurses' Union \$250,000.

The BCCLA intervened in a successful constitutional challenge to election advertising restrictions in 1998 under the previous NDP government. The BCCLA also recently spoke out against new voter and residence identification issues in Bill 42: <http://bccla.org/pressreleases/08VoterID.pdf>

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