



Campaign Finance Handbook

CHAPTER 15: OHIO ELECTION INTEGRITY COMMISSION

The Ohio Election Integrity Commission was established in 2025 (H.B. 96, 136th GA) and became effective on January 1, 2026. The commission has five sitting members that fulfill four-year terms with the chairperson appointed by the Secretary of State and an additional member each appointed by President of the Senate, the Senate Minority Leader, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Minority Leader of the House of Representative, with at least three of the members being attorneys in good standing with the Supreme Court of Ohio.

R.C. 3517.14

The commission is empowered to hear alleged violations of campaign finance law in [Revised Code sections 3517.08-3517.13, 3517.20-3517.22, 3599.03, and 3599.031](#) and election law in [Revised Code sections 3501.35, 3599.11\(A\), 3599.12\(A\)\(1\) or \(2\), 3599.13, 3599.14, and 3599.21](#). It may also issue advisory opinions in response to people whose acts it has or may have jurisdiction (e.g., campaign treasurers, committees, and candidates). The commission will not give advisory opinions on activity that has already occurred, but only on possible future activity. The opinions that the commission has issued may be used for direction when making decisions but may also be invalidated by future legislative updates. Advisory opinions are found by year or by topic on the commission's [advisory opinion](#) website.

R.C. 3517.15

Required Elements for Filing a Complaint with the Ohio Election Integrity Commission

Any person can file a complaint with the Ohio Secretary of State (Ohio SoS). Complaints to the Ohio SoS must be submitted under penalty of perjury and must contain:

- Name(s) of the person or party filing the complaint.
- Name(s) of the person or party against whom the allegations are being made.
- Address or addresses for all parties. This includes the person filing the complaint as well as the parties against whom the complaint is filed. Also, please include phone numbers and email addresses, if they are available.
- Written narrative or statement of the alleged violation or violations, specifically identifying the alleged violation, and an explanation of the personal knowledge of the complainant.
- Reference to the section or sections of the Ohio Revised Code alleged to have been violated.
- Any additional materials or exhibits to support the allegations in the complaint.

A person files a complaint by submitting the information here: [Public Integrity Division Complaint Report](#).

R.C. 3517.16



The Ohio Election Integrity Commission Process

Once a properly filed complaint is received, an investigation by the Secretary of State's Election Integrity Unit will commence. For those complaints falling under the jurisdiction of the commission, the Election Integrity Unit will prepare a report and recommendation for a finding by the Secretary that no violation has occurred, or that a violation has occurred and the relevant party shall be fined or referred for prosecution. The alleged offender has 14 days to object in writing.

If an objection is submitted in writing within 14 days, a hearing is scheduled. The hearing is held by a commission-appointed hearing officer, who will hear the evidence presented by the parties and present a report and recommendation to the commission. The commission will review the hearing officer's report and recommendation, and determine whether no violation has occurred, or a violation has occurred, in which case the party shall be fined or referred for prosecution. The OEIC may also refer back to hearing officers for further investigation and revised recommendation. Once the commission makes a final determination in the matter pending before it, the commission will notify all parties in writing of the nature of the decision.

A party fined or referred for prosecution may appeal the commission's finding within 15 days from the date of decision to the Court of Common Pleas of Franklin County or the Court of Common Pleas of the county in which the business of the party is located or in which the party is a resident.

[R.C. 3517.17\(A\)\(3\)](#)

What to Do if You Are Alleged to Have Violated a Campaign Finance Law

Being referred to the Ohio Election Integrity Commission for violating a campaign finance law is potentially serious and all parties are advised to seek legal counsel to determine their rights. In most cases, the issues are routine matters, and a few actions on your committee's part will go a long way to resolving the problem.

The first is to make sure that you have filed all reports with either the Secretary of State's office or the board of elections, as appropriate. Most referrals or complaints filed with the commission involve incomplete or missing campaign finance reports. When either a board of elections or the Secretary of State's office has referred your committee, contact the referring agency to determine what your committee must do to get into compliance.

Next, respond to the letter you receive from the commission by the due date mentioned in the letter. This response should properly explain your version of the events relating to the alleged violation and what actions you have taken to resolve the matter. The response providing your viewpoint of the case is critical for the commission's understanding of all sides in the pending case.

[R.C. 3517.16](#), [3517.17](#), [3517.18](#), [119.12](#)



Ohio Campaign Finance and Election Law Penalties

Penalties for campaign finance and election law violations are specified in the Revised Code. Some of the most requested penalties appear below.

Campaign Finance Violation	Possible Penalty	Code Citation
Failure to place a disclaimer on a political communication in violation of R.C. 3517.20(B), (C), (D), or (V) .	Fine of not more than \$500.	R.C. 3517.99(U)
Failure to file a complete and accurate report required by a candidate's campaign committee in violation of R.C. 3517.13(A) .	Fine of not more than \$100 per day.	R.C. 3517.99(A)(1)
Failure to file a complete and accurate report required by a political party or PAC in violation of R.C. 3517.13 .	Fine of not more than \$100 per day.	R.C. 3517.99(A)(2)
A campaign committee, PAC, party, legislative campaign fund, or individual making or receiving contributions in excess of the limits in violation of R.C. 3517.102 . (Violation by an individual must be made knowingly.)	Fine of three times the excess amount contributed, unless it is completely refunded within five business days after it is accepted or within ten business days after notification by the Secretary of State or a board of elections.	R.C. 3517.99(I), (J)
Improper solicitation of contributions by statewide or county officials or candidates in violation of R.C. 3517.092 .	First-degree misdemeanor.	R.C. 3517.99(M)(1)
Knowing acceptance of a contribution by a statewide or county official, in violation of R.C. 3517.092 .	Fine of three times the contribution amount and return of the contribution.	R.C. 3517.99(M)(2)
Unknowing acceptance of contribution by a statewide or county official, in violation of R.C. 3517.092 .	Return of contribution.	R.C. 3517.99(M)(2)



Campaign Finance Violation	Possible Penalty	Code Citation
Failure to file a required monthly or two-business-day report by a statewide candidate in violation of R.C. 3517.13(A) .	Fine of not more than \$100 per day.	R.C. 3517.99(A)(1)
Knowing failure to report a gift or misrepresent a gift received by a political party's Building Fund in violation of R.C. 3517.101(G)(2) or R.C. 3517.13(G) .	Fine of not more than \$10,000.	R.C. 3517.99(C)
Misrepresentation or concealment of a contribution or expenditure in violation of R.C.3517.13(G) .	Fine of not more than \$10,000; if by a candidate, also possible forfeiture of office.	R.C. 3517.99(C)
Cash contributions in excess of \$100 in violation of R.C. 3517.13 .	Fine of not more than three times the amount contributed.	R.C. 3517.99(D)
Conversion of campaign funds for personal use in violation of R.C. 3517.13(O), (P), or (Q) .	First-degree misdemeanor.	R.C. 3517.99(F)
Election falsification matters, such as signing a false campaign finance report.	Fifth-degree felony.	R.C. 3599.36
Election Violations	Possible Penalty	Code Citation
Loitering or congregating near polling places issues in violation of R.C. 3501.35 .	Fine of not more than \$1,000.	R.C. 3517.171(A)(2)
Signing of petitions in violation of R.C. 3599.13 .	Fine of not more than \$1,000.	R.C. 3517.171(A)(2)
Prohibited acts concerning declarations or petitions in violation of R.C. 3599.14 .	Fine of not more than \$1,000.	R.C. 3517.171(A)(2)
Prohibitions concerning absent voter's ballot in violation of R.C. 3599.21 .	Fine of not more than \$1,000.	R.C. 3517.171(A)(2)
False voter registration in violation of R.C. 3599.11(A) .	Fine of not more than \$1,000.	R.C. 3517.171(A)(2)



Election Violations	Possible Penalty	Code Citation
Illegal voting in violation of R.C. 3599.12(A)(1) or (2) .	Fine of not more than \$1,000.	R.C. 3517.171(A)(2)

More Information

For more information about anything in this chapter, including how to request an advisory opinion or report allegations of election fraud, voter suppression, or campaign finance violations, contact EIU@OhioSoS.gov or 614-696-8561.