



Campaign Finance Handbook

CHAPTER 15: OHIO ELECTIONS COMMISSION

The Ohio Elections Commission consists of seven persons, six of whom are appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the combined House and Senate caucuses of each of the major political parties. Three members must be appointed from each of two major political parties with the seventh member being an unaffiliated elector appointed by the other six members. If the six members fail to appoint the seventh member within 30 days, then the Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court makes the appointment. All members serve five-year terms.

[R.C. 3517.152-3517.157](#)

The commission is empowered to hear alleged violations of campaign finance law in [Revised Code sections 3517.08-3517.13, 3517.17, 3517.18, 3517.20-3517.22, 3599.03, and 3599.031](#). It may also interpret and write advisory opinions about campaign finance law in response to persons over 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. 3517.153](#)

Required Elements for Filing a Complaint with the Ohio Elections Commission

Any person can file a complaint with the Ohio Elections Commission. Complaints to the Ohio Elections Commission must be submitted in affidavit form containing the following elements:

1. Name(s) of the person or party filing the complaint;
2. Name(s) of the person or party against whom the allegations are being made;
3. 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 if they are available;
4. A written narrative or statement of the alleged violation or violations, specifically identifying the statement or statements which you allege to be false and an explanation of the personal knowledge of the complainant;
5. A reference to the section or sections of the Ohio Revised Code alleged to have been violated; and



6. The complaint must be originally signed and properly notarized. A proper notarization includes the phrase “signed and sworn before a Notary Public.”

Any additional materials or exhibits may be included to support the allegations in the complaint. A person files a complaint by mailing the above to the following address:

Ohio Elections Commission
Suite 1850 Riffe Center
77 South High St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

At a Meeting of the Ohio Elections Commission

The commission reviews complaints at a regular meeting of the full commission. If the commission believes that it has sufficient evidence in the complaint and response to make a final determination in the matter, then the commission will proceed to a final resolution of the matter immediately. If the evidence at the preliminary review is insufficient, then the commission may schedule a full hearing of the matter for a greater presentation of the evidence at a later date.

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.

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

Being referred to the Ohio Elections Commission for violating a campaign finance law is a potentially serious, but often routine, matter. In most cases, a few actions on your committee’s part will go a long way to resolve 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. Often, this means the filing of a report that was not filed or responding to a letter requesting corrections or additional information.

When either a board of elections or the Secretary of State’s Office has referred your committee, the second thing to do is to contact the referring agency to determine what your committee must do to get into compliance. Often, this means the filing of a report that was not filed or responding to a letter requesting corrections or additional information.



Next, respond to the letter you receive from the commission with a notarized affidavit by the due date mentioned in the letter. This affidavit should properly explain your version of the events relating to the alleged violation. The affidavit providing your viewpoint on the case is critical for the commission's understanding of all sides in the pending case.

Never hesitate to call the commission at (614) 466-3205 with any questions.

More Information

For more information about anything in this chapter, including how to request an advisory opinion or reporting a possible violation, please contact the Ohio Elections Commission at 614-466-3205

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77 South High St.
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