



Campaign Finance Handbook

CHAPTER 17: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Filing Deadlines

QUESTION:

I forgot that today is the deadline to file my campaign finance report. May I get an extension?

ANSWER:

No. [R.C. 3517.10](#) sets the deadline that campaign finance reports are due. Neither the Secretary of State's Office nor the boards of elections have the authority to extend a filing deadline.

QUESTION:

Do I still need to file campaign finance reports after I lost the election?

ANSWER:

Yes, a campaign committee must continue to file required reports until the committee properly terminates. See [Chapter 2, Candidates](#), for how to terminate a campaign committee.

Registering a Committee - Designation of Treasurer

QUESTION:

I am a candidate who will not be accepting any contributions or spending any money. Am I still required to file a Designation of Treasurer?

ANSWER:

As long as there are no contributions received (including in-kind contributions) and no expenditures made (including the candidate's own funds), the filing of [Form 30-D, Designation of Treasurer](#), is not required. The payment of the filing fee by the candidate from their personal funds does not trigger the requirement to file a Designation of Treasurer.

[OAC 111:2-4-01](#)

QUESTION:

Can I file my Designation of Treasurer online?

ANSWER:

Committees intending to file with their local board of elections may file their Designation of Treasurer electronically using [BOe-file](#). Committees intending to file with the Secretary of State's Office may email a scanned copy, signed by both the Candidate (or PAC/party authorized representative) and the treasurer to CFforms@OhioSoS.gov.

**QUESTION:**

The bank says I need to register with the Secretary of State and get an EIN, what do I need to do?

ANSWER:

The Designation of Treasurer is the committee's official registration form. Local committees can request their board of election date stamp their DOT as received to evidence its filing. Information on how to get an EIN from the IRS is found on their [website](#).

Contributions

QUESTION:

Do I have to itemize contributions of \$25 or less?

ANSWER:

Contributions of \$25 or less received at a social or fund-raising event may be reported together on [Form 31-E](#) as "Contributions received \$25 or less," along with the date and total amount. This exemption is not based on the cost of a ticket to attend the fund-raising event, but on the total amount each contributor gave during the event. In-kind contributions of \$325 or less that were received at a social or fund-raising event may likewise be listed under the description, "In-kind contributions received \$325 or less," along with the date and total amount. The committee is still responsible for collecting and maintaining the contributor information, even when it does not have to itemize it in the report. Contributions of any amount reported on [Form 31-A, Statement of Contributions Received](#), must be fully itemized.

[R.C. 3517.10\(B\)](#)

QUESTION:

My campaign committee received a check from a partnership or LLC. May I accept it? How should I report the contribution?

ANSWER:

A partnership or LLC may use its checking account to contribute. But when a partnership or LLC issues a contribution check it must also provide the recipient with details on how the check is to be attributed among one or more of the partners or owners. The partnership or LLC may not contribute in the name of the business alone. The recipient campaign committee must itemize the contribution according to the details provided – as separate individual contributions, listing the name of the partnership or LLC in the employer/occupation field.

[R.C. 3517.10 \(I\); OAC 111:2-4-20](#)

**QUESTION:**

How do I report online contributions?

ANSWER:

Online contributions have two transactions to report, 1) the full contribution amount received from each contributor, and 2) the fee paid to the online payment processor. The fees an online payment processor charges can be aggregated if the amount exceeds \$25.00 during the reporting period and the committee can provide a copy of the processor's statement verifying each underlying transaction.

[OAC 111:2-4-13](#)

QUESTION:

I received a contribution from a joint checking account. How do I report the contribution?

ANSWER:

Unless otherwise instructed by the contributor, report the contribution as coming from the individual signing the check. If there is evidence suggesting that the contribution is from both individuals, then report the contribution as two separate contributions, attributing the specified amount to each contributor.

[OAC 111:2-4-14](#)

Expenditures

QUESTION:

How may a political action committee (PAC) or a political contributing entity (PCE) spend its funds?

ANSWER:

PACs and PCEs may only spend money for two purposes: either to influence an election or to make a charitable contribution. See [Chapter 7, Political Action Committees](#), and [Chapter 8, Political Contributing Entities](#), for more information.

[R.C. 3517.01\(B\)\(6\)](#)

QUESTION:

I am a candidate and I would like to purchase some flowers for my staff members out of my campaign account. Is this a permissible expense?

ANSWER:

Yes. Campaign funds may be used to pay for campaign expenses, including gifts for staff or



campaign workers, as long as the gifts are reasonable in cost and form. See [Chapter 2, Candidates](#), for more information.

QUESTION:

I am a candidate who just won in the primary. May I use campaign funds to throw a party for my campaign workers?

ANSWER:

Yes. Parties and events associated with an election or a candidate's public office are permitted. [OEC 2004ELC-03; 87-13](#)

QUESTION:

How do I report a check that has not cleared or was never cashed?

ANSWER:

Report the check not clearing or failing to be cashed on Form 31-A-2, Statement of Other Income, listing the original payee as the contributor, date the check was originally written, the amount of the check, and enter the other income type of "RE" or "Refund."

QUESTION:

How much can be reimbursed for mileage?

ANSWER:

A committee may reimburse an individual up to the current IRS business mileage reimbursement rate, found here: [Standard Mileage Rates | Internal Revenue Service \(irs.gov\)](#).

Loans & Debts

QUESTION:

Please explain the difference between "loan" and "debt."

ANSWER:

A loan is a *monetary contribution* (money going into the separate campaign account) that is expected to be repaid in the future (Form 31-C). A debt is *items or services* provided to the campaign for which payment is expected in the future (Form 31-N).

QUESTION:

After my previous unsuccessful campaign several years ago, I forgave \$2,000 in personal loans to my committee. This year I ran for office again and was elected. I have a balance in my campaign



account after the election. May I take the new campaign funds and reimburse myself for the previous loan?

ANSWER:

No. The Ohio Elections Commission has ruled that once a loan or debt is forgiven, it cannot be reinstated.

[OEC 2001ELC-01](#)

Disclaimers

QUESTION:

The signs I'm using in my re-election this year list the name and address of my former treasurer in the disclaimer. Is there any way I can use these signs?

ANSWER:

A proper disclaimer is no longer required to include the treasurer's name and address. That said, a disclaimer must have current information when the communication, publication, or other item is posted or distributed. If the disclaimer includes outdated information the committee must cover the incorrect information or update the information by placing a label with the current disclaimer information.

Ballot Issue Committees

QUESTION:

Some friends and I want to campaign for a school levy. Do we have to report that information?

ANSWER:

Maybe. If the group will accept and pool resources (contributions) to expressly advocate support for the levy, it will have to register as a ballot issue committee. See [Chapter 8, Ballot Issue Committees](#), for more information and reporting requirements.

QUESTION:

My local school board has a levy on the ballot in the coming election and the board is using the school building for fund-raising events and sending notes home with my children. Is this legal and where can I go to complain about such activities?

ANSWER:

This question deals with the appropriate use of public property and tax monies related to an election. This issue is not addressed in Ohio's campaign finance or election laws. You may contact



the law director, prosecutor, or auditor in the jurisdiction involved to see if this is permitted activity.

Examination Letters & Campaign Finance Violations

QUESTION:

I received a letter from the Secretary of State's Office asking for more information relative to a report I filed last year. What should I do?

ANSWER:

Don't ignore it! The letter you received is part of the Secretary of State's Office or your board of elections duty to examine campaign finance reports for compliance with the law. The information being sought is necessary to complete the report or otherwise complete the examination of the report. State law requires your response within 21 days of receipt of the letter. Call the examiner whose name, telephone number, and email address appear for any help you may need in understanding the content of the letter, the examination process, or disclosure compliance.

QUESTION:

What if I believe that someone has violated a campaign finance law?

ANSWER:

Any individual who has personal knowledge of a violation may file a complaint directly with the Ohio Elections Commission. See [Chapter 14, Ohio Elections Commission](#), and the commission's [website](#) for more information on how to file a complaint.