



Campaign Finance Online Filing System (CFOFS) User Manual

All statewide and general assembly candidate campaign committees, statewide political action committees (PAC), statewide political contributing entities (PCE), state political party committees, legislative campaign funds (LCF) and certain accounts of county political party committees are subject to filing campaign finance reports electronically with the secretary of state (SOS). The SOS CFOFS is the only manner by which campaign finance reports and data can be filed electronically. Data can be placed into CFOFS by either of the following methods:

1. via direct entry of each transaction into CFOFS, or
2. via an upload interface within CFOFS where properly formatted files for contributions, expenditures, and loans/debts can be selected and loaded into the application.

While developing CFOFS, great care was taken to not only create an intuitive and complete application for compliance with the statute, but also embed helpful user functions for committee data management. This manual will guide the user through the process of filing campaign finance reports electronically through CFOFS – whether the data is entered directly or uploaded. Of course, before filings are required, a committee must exist as a filing entity with the SOS. All non-federal filing entities will be issued the credentials necessary to access the online filing system. Therefore, this manual presumes the user represents an existing filing entity as listed above and possesses the user name, password and electronic signature assigned to that entity.

In addition to this manual, users can receive assistance from staff of the Campaign Finance Division by calling (614) 466-3111.

LOGIN

Access credentials consist of three (3) components:

1. User Name
2. Password
3. Electronic Signature

These are issued to each entity subject to mandatory electronic filing with the SOS and are typically provided to the filing entity in the form of a letter.

With the access credentials, a filing entity must go the login page of CFOFS:

NOTE: Data entered into CFOFS is not filed until the user completes the submit process and receives a time-stamped cover page receipt.

REPORT CENTER

After entering the access credentials and clicking the "Login" button the user is taken to the **Report Center** screen.

Report Center is the hub of all filing activity in CFOFS. At Report Center, the user can create a new report, choose a created report in which to work (adding, editing or deleting entered data), choose a filed report to view or amend, or choose to print or download any reports created, submitted or amended.

The user will enter the appropriate report YEAR and report TYPE. The year should relate to the dates of transactions to be included in the report. For example, a 2010 Annual report is filed to disclose transactions occurring in 2010 – even though the report is filed in January of 2011. A user should contact the Campaign Finance Division at (614) 466-3111 for assistance in determining the appropriate report year or report type

The CREATE REPORT drop down field contains all report types necessary for compliance. It is very important for the user to select the appropriate report type for the reporting period. Once created, all contribution, expenditure, and loan/debt transactions can be entered or uploaded at any time prior to the deadline for filing the created report.

Until the created report is submitted by the user, it can be modified from one report type to another. That is, if a PRE-PRIMARY report is initially created but the candidate is not certified and does not appear on the ballot, thereby removing the requirement of filing the PRE-PRIMARY, the user can modify the filing to become a SEMIANNUAL report type in anticipation of being required to file that report. Should this, or a similar scenario occur, the user could change the designated report type to another report type for proper filing. This change can be done at the Report Center.

After creating a report, each time the user logs into CFOFS, the Report Center will list all reports created, along with any that have been previously submitted and the status of all created, submitted, or amended reports.

REPORT CENTER: WORKING WITH A REPORT

This screen is the portal for the user to access those areas of CFOFS where transactions can be entered.

Within a chosen report, CFOFS presents task options to the user ordered from those most frequently used to tasks which are less common for users:

Main Tasks,

Additional Tasks, and

Other Tasks

The **Main Tasks** include:

Create / Edit Monetary Contributions

Create / Edit Expenditures

These areas are for entering new transactions into the selected report or for accessing previously entered transactions for review, modification or deletion.

Review | Audit | Submit from Cover Page

This is the area for the user to review the contents of the report (including cover page line-item totals), perform several basic pre-audits of the data and submit the report.

The Additional Tasks include:

Create / Edit In-Kind Contributions Received

Create / Edit In-Kind Contributions Made

These areas are for entering or modifying non-monetary contributions received or made.

Create / Edit Independent Expenditures

This area is for entering expenditures made that impact another candidate or ballot issue and were not coordinated with that candidate or ballot issue committee.

Create Other Income

This area is for entering entity income that is not a contribution. Examples of non-contribution income are interest income and refunds.

Create Loans Received

This area is for entering and managing all loans received and any payments made during the reporting period.

Create Loans Made

This area is for entering and managing all loans made and any payments received during the reporting period.

Create Outstanding Debts

This area is for entering and managing debts owed by the filing entity.

The **Other Tasks** include:

The user can also choose to [PRINT REPORT](#) from this screen. The entered contents of a report can be formatted for printing at any time prior to or after submitting.

I WANT TO WORK WITH A DIFFERENT REPORT

Clicking this link will take the user to the **REPORT CENTER** where a different report can be accessed or created.

I WANT TO MODIFY THE REPORT TYPE/YEAR

Clicking this link will permit the user to change the report type of a created, but not yet submitted, report or the year associated with the created report type.

I WANT TO UPLOAD FILES

Clicking this link will launch an interface where the user can choose properly formatted contribution, expenditure, and loan/debt files to be uploaded into CFOFS. This is an option built into CFOFS to accommodate those filing entities that may use other campaign management software to record campaign finance information to bypass the use of CFOFS for direct transaction entry.

ENTERING DATA

Campaign finance data is inserted into CFOFS through one of two methods:

1. via direct entry of each transaction into CFOFS, or
2. via an upload interface within CFOFS where properly formatted files for contributions, expenditures, and loans/debts can be selected and loaded into the application.

Throughout CFOFS, the user will notice a connection, through the use of schedule codes, to the paper forms prescribed by the Secretary of State. This connection is made to demonstrate where in CFOFS a user would disclose data that would otherwise be reported on paper. Upon selecting a particular schedule code in any of the entry screens, CFOFS will automatically update the fields available for disclosure of all data relevant to that schedule code.

REQUIRED FIELDS

Users will notice in each of the various CFOFS transaction entry screens that certain fields are required to be filled to effect a save of the transaction. The labels for these fields are identified with an asterisk (*). Although many fields throughout CFOFS are not required as a condition of completing the report for filing, Ohio's campaign finance law requires complete and full disclosure of the details for each transaction. For example, the employer information is statutorily required of any individual contributor of more than \$100. However, CFOFS does not require completion of the field for the entry to be saved into the system because the name of the employer may not be known at the time that the contribution is being recorded. Users can enter the system-required

data to record the basic details of the transaction and then later logon and add other data which was not previously available.

ADDRESS BOOK LOOKUP & PRE-FILL

When the name associated with a particular transaction is an existing entry in the filing entity's CFOFS Address Book, - such as a frequent contributor to the entity - the user will notice that CFOFS will automatically lookup the name of the contributor for auto selection and information pre-fill. This convenience feature exists throughout CFOFS for all types of transactions.

When the name, address and other detailed information for a transaction does not exist in the filing entity's Address Book, it will be inserted both as a transaction and as an entry in the Address Book when it is first recorded as any type of transaction. Users may also enter or edit information in the Address Book at any time so that the data is kept current.

PAC IDENTITY AND DETAIL LOOKUP & PRE-FILL

CFOFS contains a feature to assist a user when recording a contribution from a Political Action Committee (PAC). After selecting that the contributor is a NON-INDIVIDUAL, the user will notice that the first field offered is the PAC registration number. By simply entering the PAC registration number – as provided by the PAC – the lookup feature will automatically complete additional details related to that particular PAC. The user will need to provide the date of the contribution and the amount.

CREATE / EDIT MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS

When accessed, the user must select what contribution type is to be entered. CFOFS will default to the most common of contributions, those reported on form 31-A Statement of Contributions Received. However, all other schedule codes are available for selection, depending on the filing entity type.

After selecting the schedule code associated with the particular contribution type, the user will acknowledge the contribution as received from an individual or a non-individual. This distinction is necessary to properly manage the data submitted and structure the entries for public disclosure.

The fields that follow are those necessary for compliance with state disclosure law.

PREVIOUSLY CREATED CONTRIBUTIONS

As transactions are entered throughout CFOFS, the user will notice a history list at the bottom of the screen. This functionality is provided to assist the user to track the progress of recording transactions.

CREATE / EDIT EXPENDITURES

When accessed, the user must select what expenditure type is to be entered. CFOFS will default to the most common of expenditures, those reported on form 31-B Statement of Expenditures. However, all other schedule codes are available for selection, depending on the filing entity type.

After selecting the schedule code associated with the particular expenditure type, the user will acknowledge the expenditure as received from an individual or a non-individual. This distinction is necessary to properly manage the data submitted and structure the entries for public disclosure.

The fields that follow are those necessary for compliance with state disclosure law.

PREVIOUSLY CREATED EXPENDITURES

As transactions are entered throughout CFOFS, the user will notice a history list at the bottom of the screen. This functionality is provided to assist the user to track the progress of recording transactions.

COVER PAGE

The cover page of the created/selected report can be accessed by clicking on the

[REVIEW | AUDIT | SUBMIT FROM COVER PAGE](#)

link located at the Report Center. A report is not filed until the user completes the submit process available at the cover page. The user is presented with the Report Status in a text box dedicated to tracking the filing and subsequent amending of any report.

In order to view an accurate summation of cover page data, the user must enter the Balance Brought Forward (line 1), then press "Recalculate" button at the bottom of the screen. The amount entered in line 1 should match the amount reported as the Balance on Hand (line 6) of the last report submitted. CFOFS will automatically complete the cover page and account for balance information in accordance with the amount entered in line 1. If the figures displayed on the cover page do not match the expected figures, the user must review the details entered or uploaded into CFOFS. The calculations of CFOFS are based completely on the data entered or uploaded and cannot be changed at the report cover page.

For any line item on the CFOFS cover page screen, the user can directly access the detailed transactions associated with that cover page line. This navigational function is a help to the user for reviewing the components of a report in their relation to the cover page summary.

In an effort to assist filers, CFOFS will pre-audit entered transactions for several statutory requirements. This pre-audit will check for compliance items such as:

Acceptance of cash contributions in excess of \$100.00, and;

Failure to disclose the employer/occupation information for a contributor.

As the user enters data into CFOFS, formatting requirements and restrictions will be programmatically enforced. For example, a user will not be permitted to enter OHIO in any STATE field; rather CFOFS will enforce the requirement of a two-character value.

PLEASE NOTE: A successfully submitted campaign finance report may require some type of follow-up as the report is audited for compliance with Ohio's campaign finance statute. Such follow-up could include the need to file a formal amendment.

FILING THE REPORT

To file a report, the user must complete the cover page. As detailed previously, the user enters the amount brought forward (line 1) and, by pressing the "Recalculate" button, completes the summary fields for the cover page.

Once the cover page is completed, the user can choose to proceed with the formal submission of the filing. Clicking on the "Submit" button will trigger an a requirement that the user affirm their understanding that the report is being filed under penalty of election falsification, just as all other reports filed via electronic means or on paper forms. The user will have the opportunity to proceed with the submission of the report or cancel the process.

After the user presses the "Submit" button a second time, the report will be filed. CFOFS will present a page with the cover page line-item totals, a count of all entries and a date-time stamp of the filing. This page serves as the receipt for filing and may be accessed at any time after the submit process is complete.

OTHER FEATURES

Amendments With the launch of the enhanced CFOFS in April 2010, users will begin to have access to view each amendment filed. Each iteration of a filed or amended report will be available to the filing entity. This will allow the user a viewable

history of each transaction within each report from the original filing throughout each amendment filed by the user.

Address Book As transactions are entered or uploaded into CFOFS they are saved into each entity's **Address Book**. As discussed previously within this user manual, it is from the Address Book that the CFOFS transaction lookup and pre-fill pulls the name and address information. Information stored in the **Address Book** can be updated when needed or deleted if needed to keep the data current for use in future filings. Editing information in the Address Book does not affect any detail of submitted data on filed reports.

Download Center Data that has been entered or uploaded into CFOFS is also available through the **Download Center**. A user can choose to download data based on the nature of the transaction – e.g. contribution, expenditure or loan. This information can be downloaded for all reports, both those which have been submitted as well as those that are open but not yet submitted.

Printing report At the **Task Center** screen, the user can print the report. This process can be selected at any time and is not dependent on the status of the report. The print-ready report is displayed in a separate browser window and may be printed or saved as a .pdf file for ease in filing into a system folder or sharing with others via email.

Issue Report CFOFS will conduct a few pre-audit checks on data that has been entered or uploaded. These checks include:

Contributions

- CASH CONTRIBUTION OF OVER \$100
- INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION OVER \$100 AND NO EMPLOYER /OCCUPATION
- NO EVENT DATE (IF FORM 31-E)
- NO ADDRESS (ADDRESS, CITY, AND STATE ALL BLANK)

Expenditures

- NO ADDRESS (ADDRESS, CITY, AND STATE ALL BLANK)
- NO EVENT DATE (IF FORM 31-F USED)

Loans/Debts

- NO ADDRESS (ADDRESS, CITY, AND STATE ALL BLANK)

The issues flagged in this feature are likely to trigger an audit letter when the report is examined by the Campaign Finance Division. However, correction of the issues is not required to proceed with filing the report.

UPLOADING DATA

CFOFS users can choose to upload transactional data into a created report rather than directly enter the information into the application. This convenience feature offers a user the flexibility of maintaining all campaign finance data in a database or application separate from CFOFS. So long as the user can export all pertinent data into a comma-delimited text file formatted to secretary of state filing specifications, the file upload function can be a very useful tool.

Below are the steps that a user should take to make use of the file upload function in CFOFS.

1. Prepare the report according to the file format instructions located at www.OhioSoS.gov and found as an appendix to this manual. Please note the location of where these saved files are located on your computer. The user can name each of the data files (contribution, expenditure, and loan/debt) however they deem necessary. However, it is recommended that the user names each file in such a way as to make it easy to correctly identify during the upload process.
2. Using the committee's login credentials, log into the CFOFS.
3. Create the report to be filed. Please make sure that the correct report year and report type is selected. If the user is unsure of the correct report year and/or

type to be created, the user should call the campaign finance division at 614-466-3111 if you are unsure which report you should create.

4. Once the report has been created, at the **Report Center** please click the report you want to work on.
5. On the **Task** page please click **I want to Upload Files** at the bottom of the list of **Other Tasks**.
6. At the **File Upload** page the user will notice three (3) upload options based on the type of transaction: contribution, expenditure, and loan/debt. Using the "Browse" function, the user will select the appropriate file to upload. Note: the user must select the correct file for each of the **Upload File** fields.
7. Once you have uploaded contribution, expenditures and loan/debt files for the report please click the "Process Upload" button.
8. If the files were uploaded successfully, they will appear at the bottom of the screen in the box labeled **Successfully Uploaded Files**.
9. If one or more of the files did not load successfully, the user will notice an area titled **Errors in Upload File have occurred** at the bottom of the page. An explanation of the error and identification of the record will be displayed.

When errors occur in the upload process, the user must correct them, save the file, then follow the upload process again. This may need to be repeated more than once if the data is not in the prescribed file format or of the appropriate data value.

Once all of the files have been successfully uploaded, they are in the system as if they had been keyed directly.

10. Click the "Return to Task Center" button to access the **Task Center** page.
11. From the **Task Center** page, select the **Review | Audit | Submit from Cover Page** link to proceed to the report cover page.
12. At the **Cover Page**, user must enter the amount brought forward (line 1).
13. After entering the appropriate amount brought forward, the user will click on the "Recalculate" button.
14. Once the cover page is completed, the user can choose to proceed with the formal submission of the filing. Clicking on the "Submit" button will trigger an a requirement that the user affirm their understanding that the report is being filed

under penalty of election falsification, just as all other reports filed via electronic means or on paper forms. The user will have the opportunity to proceed with the submission of the report or cancel the process.

15. After the user presses the "Submit" button a second time, the report will be filed. CFOFS will present a page with the cover page line-item totals, a count of all entries and a date-time stamp of the filing. This page serves as the receipt for filing and may be accessed at any time after the submit process is complete.

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