

State of Minnesota
Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board
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RE: Use of money collected for a political purpose on security services. Limited use of multicandidate political party expenditures for security services.

ADVISORY OPINION 468

SUMMARY

Money collected for political purposes may be used to provide security for candidates while they are campaigning, and for political party events. Under certain conditions the cost of security services may be provided by a political party as a multicandidate expenditure.

FACTS

On behalf of the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL), you request an advisory opinion from the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board based on the following facts.

1. The DFL is aware that the use of funds raised for a political purpose is regulated by Minnesota Statutes section 211B.12. This statute provides, in part, that money collected for political purposes must be used for expenses reasonably related to the conduct of election campaigns, or for noncampaign disbursements as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 10A.01, subdivision 26.
2. The DFL believes that the assassination of Representative Melissa Hortman and Mark Hortman, and the attempted assassination of Senator John Hoffman and Yvette Hoffman, have made security an important concern for candidates and for individuals attending campaign or political party events.
3. The DFL would like to provide security services for candidate and political party events. Security services that might be provided include security guards, threat assessments, and guest screening. The DFL believes that providing security is reasonable in order for attendees to feel comfortable participating in political party and candidate campaign events.

4. The DFL proposes to engage a third-party service to provide security services for events hosted by either DFL party units or by candidates. The DFL state committee and/or its legislative party units would enter into a contract with the third-party service, would pay for the security services, and would determine whether the services would be made available for specific events based on criteria established by the DFL and/or its legislative party units.
5. The DFL is aware that Minnesota Statutes section 10A.275 provides for multicandidate political party expenditures. Multicandidate political party expenditures occur when a political party unit, or two or more political party units working together, make certain specified expenditures, including “expenditures for party committee staff services that benefit three or more candidates”. The DFL notes that the Board has not addressed the question of what may be included as “party committee staff services”, and states that the statute does not limit staff services to employees of a political party unit.

Issue One

May money raised for political purposes be used to pay for security services for candidates while campaigning and for political party events?

Opinion One

Yes. Minnesota Statutes section 211B.12 provides in part that funds raised by a political party or candidate committee may be used to pay for “salaries, wages, and fees,” when the expenditures are made for political purposes.¹ The statute also provides that money collected for political purposes may be used for “other expenses . . . that are reasonably related to the conduct of election campaigns.” Both in comments to the media² and in conversations with Board staff, candidates have made it clear that following the attacks on Representative Hortman and Senator Hoffman, candidates are considering their security when scheduling campaign events, including the question of whether to campaign at all in certain venues if security cannot be provided. With that background in mind, the Board concludes that expenditures to pay the salary, wages, or fees of individuals or associations providing security services for candidates while campaigning, or for political party events, are made for a political purpose, and thereby are permitted by Minnesota Statutes section 211B.12.

The Board notes that the use of untrained personnel for security services could in itself be a threat to participants at political events. Therefore, to ensure that the payments for security services achieve the desired results, the payments should be made only to security personnel and services that are properly trained, bona fide, and professional.

¹ [Minn. Stat. § 211B.12](#)

² [Van Berkel, J. \(July 2, 2025\) After violent attacks, politicians struggle to balance security and accessibility. The Minnesota Star Tribune](#)

The Board also takes this opportunity to address the question of whether payments for security services for a candidate while campaigning should be considered a noncampaign disbursement. For a candidate's principal campaign committee, the list of noncampaign disbursements provided in Minnesota Statutes section 10A.01, subdivision 26,³ is important because the cost of the disbursements do not count against the campaign spending limit that applies to candidates who sign the public subsidy agreement.

The Board has the authority to recognize new noncampaign disbursements. In addition to providing a list of recognized noncampaign disbursements, Minnesota Statutes section 10A.01, subdivision 26, also provides that noncampaign disbursement include:

(22) other purchases or payments specified in board rules or advisory opinions as being for any purpose other than to influence the nomination or election of a candidate or to promote or defeat a ballot question;

The Board uses this authority with caution. Typically, a new category of noncampaign disbursements recognized by the Board is consistent in some way with an existing noncampaign disbursement.⁴

Generally, the twenty-nine noncampaign disbursements currently provided in statute allow candidates to spend principal campaign committee funds on goods and services that are not a direct effort to influence voters. Additionally, noncampaign disbursements are often for costs that would not occur if the candidate was not running for, or holding, public office. Notably, the list of noncampaign disbursements already includes the use of committee funds to provide two types of security for the candidate. Noncampaign disbursements include the use of committee funds to pay for accounting and legal services that support the security of the candidate or the candidate's immediate family, including specifically the cost of obtaining a harassment restraining order. Additionally, it is a noncampaign disbursement when committee funds are used to pay for "up to \$3,000 for "detection-related security monitoring expenses for a candidate, including home security hardware, maintenance of home security monitoring hardware, identity theft monitoring services, and credit monitoring services", during each two-year election cycle segment. These security costs were defined as noncampaign disbursements by the legislature, in part, because a candidate's security should not be compromised because the campaign committee was at or near the campaign expenditure limit for their campaign, and because the expenditures for security are not for the purpose of influencing voters.

In this instance the Board concludes that the rationale used by the legislature to define costs for detection-related candidate security as noncampaign disbursements also applies to the cost of security services used while the candidate is campaigning. The Board therefore recognizes payments for security guards, threat assessments, and guest screening when used by a candidate while campaigning as noncampaign disbursements. An individual providing security

³ [Minn. Stat. § 10A.01, subd. 26.](#)

⁴ See [Minn. R. 4503.0900.](#)

services as a noncampaign disbursement may not, at the same time, campaign for the candidate.

If the Board intends to apply principles of law or policy announced in an advisory opinion more broadly than to the individual or association to whom the opinion was issued, the board must adopt these principles or policies as administrative rules.⁵ Unless otherwise directed by the legislature, the Board will begin the process of adopting administrative rules at the end of the upcoming legislative session.

Issue Two

If the DFL contracts with a third party for security services, and then provides those security services to at least three separate candidates, may the party classify and report the cost of the security services as a multicandidate political party expenditure?

Opinion Two

Yes. Minnesota Statutes section 10A.275 provides, in part, that if a political party unit pays for “party committee staff services that benefit three or more candidates”, the cost of those services may be classified as multicandidate political party expenditures. The statute does not provide guidelines or standards for evaluating if a given type of service provided by political party staff qualifies as a multicandidate political party expenditure.⁶ Having determined in opinion one that money raised for political purposes may be used to provide security services, the Board finds no basis to exclude security for candidates as a type of service that may be provided as a multicandidate political party expenditure.

In reviewing the DFL plan to enter into a contract with a third party that will provide the security services to candidates, the Board considered whether the term “party committee staff” is limited to individuals who are employees of a political party unit. The great majority of political party units have no employees, and are “staffed” by volunteers. There is no indication that the legislature wanted to limit multicandidate political party expenditures to those few large political party units that actually have employees. In this case the DFL recognizes that its existing staff does not have the professional training, experience, and possibly the sheer number of individuals, needed to provide security services to candidates on a statewide basis. The individuals who are contracted to provide security services are being provided by, and at the direction of, one or more political parties, and are acting as political party staff when they provide the contracted services.

Additionally, the Board considered the scope of the proposed plan and determined that the statute does not limit the amount that political parties may spend on multicandidate political party expenditures.⁶ The Board considered the DFL plan to provide security services to

⁵ [Minn. Stat. § 10A.02, subd. 12a.](#)

⁶ The Board reached a similar conclusion in [Advisory Opinion 370](#).

candidates “based on criteria established by the DFL”, and determined that the statute does not require that staff services be provided equally to all candidates in order to qualify as a multicandidate political party expenditure.⁷

As with all advisory opinions, the specific facts of this request limit the application of the resulting opinions. This advisory opinion should not be read as stating that multicandidate political party expenditures are inclusive of any expenditure made on behalf of three or more candidates by a political party unit. In most cases an expenditure made by a political party to benefit a candidate and with that candidate’s knowledge, will result in an in-kind contribution to that candidate regardless of whether a similar in-kind contribution is also made to other candidates.

Board Note

An important feature of multicandidate political party expenditures is that the expenditures are not classified as a direct contribution to any candidate, and are not an approved expenditure on behalf of any candidate. As a result, the expenditures are not reported by political party units as contributions to any candidate. Multicandidate political party expenditures are reported as general expenditures by the party. Minnesota Statutes section 10A.20, subdivision 3, paragraph (h),⁸ requires that party expenditures that exceed \$200 in aggregate with a vendor are itemized and must disclose:

...the amount, date, and purpose of each expenditure, including an explanation of how the expenditure was used, and the name and address of, and office sought by, each candidate or local candidate on whose behalf the expenditure was made...

If the DFL provides security services in the manner described in this advisory opinion the party unit must track and disclose the amount spent on security services by candidate and date. The purpose and explanation of the expenditure for the listed candidate may be provided in the form of - security services, and the campaign event at which the security services were provided.

Candidate committees do not report multicandidate political party expenditures made on the candidate’s behalf. Security services provided by the DFL to another political party unit is an in-kind contribution to the other political party unit, and is reported by both the DFL and the party unit that receives the security services.⁹

Issued: September 17, 2025


Faris Rashid, Chair
Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

⁷ The Board reached a similar conclusion in [Advisory Opinion 377](#).

⁸ [Minn. Stat. §10A.20, subd. 3\(h\)](#)

⁹ [Minn. Stat. § 10A.20, subd. 3 \(c\), \(k\)](#).