

# Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

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## Judicial Candidate Handbook

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## Welcome

This handbook was written for you by the staff of the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board. The Board was created by the Legislature back in the 1970's. Its job is to oversee and publish information about money used to influence state elections. This includes elections for state judicial candidates. You can learn more about the mission and members of the Board on our website at [cfb.mn.gov](http://cfb.mn.gov).

This handbook is for campaign committees run by candidates for state judicial offices. The state judicial offices are district court judge, court of appeals judge, and supreme court justice. If you are a candidate for another state office, this handbook is not for you. You need a different handbook that was written for legislative and constitutional office candidates.

This handbook will tell you about the campaign finance laws that apply to starting and running a judicial candidate's campaign committee. The Code of Judicial Conduct has additional rules for judicial elections. The [Code](#) is available on the Board of Judicial Standards website. This handbook does not discuss the Code of Judicial Conduct because the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board does not oversee those provisions. Instead, this handbook discusses only the campaign finance laws that are enforced by the Campaign Finance Board.

If you print this handbook, please check the Board website periodically for updates. Look at the "Last revised" date on the first page of the online handbook to see if you have the latest version.

We have not tried to answer every possible campaign finance question in this handbook. When you can't find the answer to a question here, please call us. You can find out which staff member can best help you by looking at the Getting Help section. You also can look at our website for additional information. All the forms you need also are available on our website.

If a candidate is going to spend only his or her own money and the only campaign cost will be the cost of filing for office, the candidate does not need to register a campaign committee with the Board or file any reports with the Board.

If a candidate, however, is going to accept more than \$750 in donations, the candidate must register a campaign committee with the Board. The candidate's committee will collect donations from people who support the candidate and will spend money to help the candidate get elected. The candidate's committee must regularly report these contributions and expenditures to the Board. The information on the report is posted on the Board's website so the public knows who is spending money to influence the public's votes.

Each candidate's committee has one person in charge of the money. That person is called the treasurer. The treasurer has an important job, which is making sure that the committee follows the campaign finance laws. The treasurer also must make sure that the committee follows the election provisions in the Code of Judicial Conduct. The treasurer's job takes time and requires a person who is willing to accept a lot of responsibility.

The treasurer must receive, keep records on, and report all money coming into the committee. The treasurer has to approve all spending and make sure that the committee's money is used in legally permitted ways. If the committee enters into transactions that violate state laws or fails to file proper reports on time, it is the treasurer who is responsible to the Board. You should not become a treasurer unless you are willing and able to take on these responsibilities. If you already are a treasurer, you should be sure that you know what is expected of you and you should help the committee find another treasurer if you are unwilling or unable to accept the treasurer's responsibilities.

## **Starting a judicial candidate's campaign committee**

### **Overview**

This chapter tells you whether you need a campaign committee, what a candidate's campaign committee does, and how to set up a committee.

### **Topics covered**

- [Do I need to form a campaign committee?](#)
- [What does a candidate's campaign committee do?](#)
- [Who should be the committee chair and treasurer?](#)
- [Does the committee need a bank account?](#)
- [How often do you need to deposit contributions?](#)
- [How do you register with the Board?](#)
- [What is the time limit for registering?](#)
- [What penalties apply if you don't follow the laws for starting a committee?](#)

### **Do I need to form a campaign committee?**

A judicial candidate does not need to form a campaign committee if

- the candidate will spend only the candidate's own money on the campaign, or
- the candidate will not accept contributions totaling more than \$750 from other people.

Although a candidate who spends only his or her own money is not required to form a campaign committee, the candidate still must file campaign reports with the Board. The reports must be filed according to the schedule that applies to campaign committees. The reports also must comply with the requirements for campaign committee reports.

If the candidate is going to receive more than \$750 from supporters to get elected, the candidate must form a campaign committee.

The rest of this handbook assumes that you need a campaign committee and will help you to understand how to form and operate that committee.

### **What does a candidate's campaign committee do?**

The candidate is in control of his or her campaign, but the financial transactions of the campaign must be made through the committee. The candidate cannot accept or spend money for the campaign outside of the committee. All contributions, including money from the candidate, must go to the committee. Campaign expenditures are then made by the committee.

A candidate can have only one campaign committee for each office sought. In the campaign finance area, the candidate's campaign committee is known as the principal campaign committee.

### **Who should be the committee chair and treasurer?**

Every candidate's campaign committee must have a chair and a treasurer. The candidate chooses the chair and the treasurer and can replace them at any time. The chair and the treasurer can be the same person. Although the campaign finance laws allow a candidate to be the chair and/or the treasurer, having a judicial candidate hold either of these positions probably would violate the provisions in the Code of Judicial Conduct regarding elections. In any event, a candidate usually will not be a committee's chair or treasurer because the candidate typically will focus on campaigning.

The chair's duties are not specified in law. It therefore is up to the candidate and the committee to decide what the chair's duties will be.

The treasurer is the key financial person in the committee. The campaign finance laws specify many of the treasurer's duties. The committee cannot accept or spend any money when it does not have a treasurer. The Board will send notifications and bulletins to the treasurer and use the treasurer as the contact person for the committee. The treasurer's job has several parts.

### **Recordkeeping**

The treasurer must keep detailed records of all the contributions that the committee receives and of all the money the committee spends. Some of the things that the treasurer must keep records of include the following:

- The total amount of money that the committee receives;
- The name and address of anyone who gives more than \$20 to the committee along with the date and the amount of the contribution;
- Every expenditure made by the committee along with the date and amount of the expense;
- Every expenditure made by someone with the committee's approval along with the date and amount of the expense; and
- The name, address, and Board registration number of any political committee or fund, candidate's committee, or party unit to which the committee gives money along with the date and amount of the contribution.

This list of recordkeeping tasks is just a sample of what the treasurer must do. The different sections of this handbook provide more details about the records that must be kept for each kind of transaction.

Good records are important because candidates must tell the public who has given them money and what they did with those contributions. Also, there are limits on the amount of money and help that a candidate's committee can receive. Many of these limits apply to contributions given over the course of a two-year period. Without good records, the committee cannot know if the total amount received from someone over the two-year period is more than the allowed amount. The committee also will not have the information needed to prepare its reports. The treasurer or the candidate must save the records for four years.

### **Knowing general campaign finance laws**

The treasurer does not need to know all the campaign finance laws. But a treasurer should know enough about these laws to spot potential problems. The treasurer also should know where to find campaign finance information and how to get additional help when needed. For example, if a treasurer generally knows that there are contribution limits on the total amount that an individual can give the committee, the treasurer will understand how important it is to check those limits whenever the committee receives an initial contribution or a second contribution from the same person. The treasurer should know that the specific contribution limits and other important information are available in this handbook and on the Board's website. The treasurer also should know that Board staff members are available to answer campaign finance questions.

### **Reconciliation**

The committee's records are like bank statements. The treasurer regularly must compare the committee's actual cash on hand with its receipts and spending records. If the committee's records do not reconcile with the bank's records, the treasurer must find and fix the problem.

### **Reporting**

The treasurer must report all receipts and spending to the Board. There is only one report required during a non-election year. The number of reports due during an election year depends on the office for which the candidate is running and whether the candidate wins at a primary election. The reporting section of this handbook has more details about the number of reports required and their due dates.

In addition, just before the election, the treasurer also must report large contributions as they happen. The treasurer signs each report to confirm that the information on it is complete, true, and correct. Because the treasurer is responsible for the report, all of the committee's recordkeeping and reconciliation should be done by the treasurer or under the treasurer's close supervision. If the committee has no treasurer, the candidate must file the committee's reports.

The Board has free software called Campaign Finance Reporter (CFR). You can install CFR on your computer and use it to keep the committee's records. CFR incorporates the campaign finance laws. As you enter your records, it will alert you to possible problems. If you enter

records regularly, you should have time to fix most problems before the time limit has passed. You also can use CFR to generate reports and send them electronically to the Board.

The Board offers [training sessions](#) for CFR in St. Paul and, occasionally, at locations around the state. [CFR tutorials](#) also are available on the Board website. Finally, you can always call the Board if you need additional CFR support.

For most committees, filing using an electronic system is required. This means that the treasurer should plan to take training and use the CFR software to keep the committee's records. Some committees will qualify for an exemption from the electronic filing requirement. More information about the electronic filing requirement and the exemption is available on the Board's website.

### **Does the committee need a bank account?**

Yes. Money given to a candidate's campaign committee cannot be mixed with any other money. You must open a separate bank account for the campaign committee. The treasurer must have signing authority for the account. The Board strongly suggests that the chair or the candidate also have signing authority for the account in case the treasurer resigns or is unable to carry out the job's duties. This is also a good tool for financial control because it ensures that at least two people have access to the official bank records.

To open a bank account, you need an identification number from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS has two types of identification numbers: an individual number (TIN) and an employer number (EIN). The IRS gives EINs to political organizations, even those that are not actually employers. The IRS has [EIN information](#) on its website and an [EIN online application](#). You also can call the IRS at (800) 829-4933 or send the IRS an [SS-4 Application for an Employer Identification Number](#). For more detailed help, see the step-by-step instructions in the Common Questions section of this handbook.

Some candidates decide to open their campaign checking account as a personal account. Your bank will let you know if this is an option. If it is, you will use your social security number as your identification number.

All money received by the campaign committee must be deposited into the committee's bank account.

### **How often do you need to deposit contributions?**

In general, you must deposit contributions within 10 business days of receiving the money. For contributions received through electronic means, such as PayPal, the committee receives the money on the date that it has access to the funds under the terms of the agreement with the contribution processor. For all other contributions, the committee receives the money on the date when it physically receives the contribution. If possible, you may want to make copies of



any checks before you deposit them. This may make it easier to reconcile the committee's financial records.

### **How do you register with the Board?**

After you have opened the campaign committee's bank account, you can register the committee with the Board. You must use the Board's [registration form](#) to register the committee.

On the registration form, you will report basic information such as the names and addresses of the candidate, the committee, the committee's officers, and the committee's bank account. You can deliver the form to the Board in person or by mail, fax, or email. At this time, a committee cannot register on-line. The actual name of the committee is left to the candidate's discretion, but it typically includes the name of the candidate and either a reference to the office sought or the judicial district in which the candidate is running. The registration form must be signed by the treasurer or the candidate.

If something that you list on the registration changes, you must tell the Board within 10 days of the change. It is very important to promptly notify the Board of changes in the committee contact information because this is the information that the Board uses when it needs to contact the committee. Changes must be in writing. You can use the same form to report changes or send an e-mail or letter with the needed information.

Remember to open mail from the Board promptly. Much of the information is date sensitive.

### **What is the time limit for registering?**

You must register the candidate's campaign committee with the Board within 14 days after receiving more than \$750 from supporters or spending more than \$750 to help the candidate get nominated or elected.

If a candidate for district court judge receives more than \$400 from any one source during the 14 days before the election, you must register a campaign committee for the candidate by the end of the next business day after receiving the contribution.

A supreme court or court of appeals judicial candidate must register a campaign committee by the end of the next business day after receiving more than \$2,000 from any one source during the 14 days before the election.

**What penalties apply if you don't follow the laws for starting a committee?**

If you do not register the committee within the required time limit, the Board can charge a late fee. The Board can charge an additional penalty of up to \$1,000 for not filing a registration after the Board has sent notice that your registration is overdue.

## Receiving contributions

### Overview

This chapter tells you what things the committee can receive from people who want to help the candidate get elected. It also tells you what records to keep for those contributions. You will use the records to make reports to the Board.

### Topics covered

[Where to find the Code of Judicial Conduct](#)

[What is a contribution?](#)

[A note about independent expenditures](#)

[How should you handle loans?](#)

[Who can give you contributions?](#)

[Who can't give you contributions?](#)

[What do you do if you accept a contribution from a prohibited source?](#)

[What are the contribution limits?](#)

[What do you do if you accept a contribution that is more than the limits?](#)

[How should you handle joint contributions?](#)

[What records do you have to keep?](#)

[What penalties apply to contributions that don't follow the rules?](#)

### Where to find the Code of Judicial Conduct

The Code of Judicial Conduct has additional rules about contributions and judicial elections. The [Code of Judicial Conduct](#) is available on the Board of Judicial Standards website. This handbook does not discuss the Code of Judicial Conduct because the Campaign Finance Board does not oversee those rules. Instead, this handbook discusses only the campaign finance laws that are enforced by the Campaign Finance Board.

### What is a contribution?

A contribution is anything given to the committee. The contribution can be money. A contribution also can be a thing or a service. Contributions of anything other than money are called in-kind contributions. There are some exceptions to the general rule that everything given to the committee is a contribution. A committee volunteer's time is not a contribution. This volunteer time can include professional or technical services as long as the service does not require the use of equipment or other resources from a business.

A committee cannot accept any contributions when it does not have a treasurer. All money that the committee receives must be deposited in the committee's bank account. The committee's money cannot be mixed with anyone else's funds. If possible, you should make a copy of any checks before you deposit them. This will make it easier to reconcile the committee's records.

The Code of Judicial Conduct has additional rules about contributions in judicial elections. The Code is available on the Board of Judicial on Judicial Standards website.

### **Vehicle use**

The use of a personal car for campaign purposes by a volunteer or by the candidate is **not** a contribution.

A committee can choose to reimburse a volunteer or the candidate for the vehicle use. To reimburse someone, you must use the IRS business mileage rate. This [rate](#) is available on the Board's website. If you do reimburse someone for vehicle use, you must report it as a campaign expenditure or a noncampaign disbursement, depending on what the person was doing while using the vehicle.

### **In-kind contributions**

An in-kind contribution is always valued at fair market value. For example, if someone gives the committee a used computer, the value of the contribution would be the price for which the donor could have sold the computer in the open market. The donor and the committee should agree on the value of the in-kind contribution. There is an exception for things that are given to the committee that have little value. You do not have to keep track of or report donations of goods that have a market value of \$20 or less.

Remember that every in-kind contribution is also an in-kind expenditure on the date that it was accepted by the committee. The handbook section on spending money tells you how to report in-kind expenditures.

### **Approved expenditures**

Sometimes, an individual or a group will spend money on the candidate's behalf. If the candidate or the committee approves, or is in any way involved with the spending, the amount spent is a contribution to the committee. This type of campaign spending is called an approved expenditure.

If someone wants to make an approved expenditure on the candidate's behalf, the treasurer must approve the expense in advance and in writing. The written approval must state the amount that can be spent and the reason for the spending. The Board has a form on its website for [approving an expenditure](#). A letter also is acceptable proof of approval. You should keep a copy of the letter or the form for the committee's records.

Approved expenditures are always in-kind contributions. The amount of the contribution is the amount spent on the candidate's behalf. The date of the contribution is the date that the contribution was accepted.

### **Notice required when selling items**

Many times, a committee will try to raise money by selling t-shirts, hats, or other items. Committees also sell tickets to fundraisers. The money that the committee receives from the sale of an item or a ticket to an event is a contribution to the committee. It is **not** income.

When a committee sells goods or services to raise money, it must give notice to the purchasers that the proceeds from the sale are a contribution to the committee. This notice may be given verbally at the time of the sale. Alternatively, the committee may give the notice by prominently displaying it on a sign at the place where the items are sold. If the committee is selling items at a location with more than one cashier, a notice must be posted at each location where a purchase may be made.

The notice requirement does not apply to events where the main purpose is to conduct fundraising or to goods or services sold at a fundraising event that requires the purchase of a ticket to attend.

### **Income**

A committee also could earn income such as interest on the committee's bank account or proceeds from selling property that was used in the regular operation of the committee. Income is not a contribution to the committee. Income is reported on a different schedule than contributions and is not subject to the same restrictions as contributions. Because income is an exception to the general rule, contact Board staff if you have any questions about reporting a receipt as income rather than as a contribution.

The money that a committee gets from selling tickets to fundraisers is not income. These funds are contributions from the people who bought tickets. The Common Questions section of the handbook talks about specific issues related to different types of fundraisers.

### **A note about independent expenditures**

Sometimes individuals or groups will make expenditures on the candidate's behalf without consulting with or involving the candidate or the candidate's committee in any way. If the expenditure meets the requirements of the law for independence, it is called an "independent expenditure." An independent expenditure is not a contribution to the candidate and is not included on the committee's report. If you know about an independent expenditure in advance

or have had discussions about an independent expenditure, you should be very careful that your involvement has not converted the independent expenditure to a contribution. If in doubt, ask for guidance from a Board staff member.

### **How should you handle loans?**

All loans require a written agreement between the lender and the committee, even if the lender is the candidate. The written agreement must include the date and amount of the loan and the name, address, occupation, and principal place of business of the lender and any co-signer or guarantor. All loans must eventually be either repaid or forgiven.

A loan or a loan guarantee is not a contribution until the loan is forgiven or it is paid by someone other than the committee. If the loan is forgiven, the lender that forgave the loan is the donor of the contribution. If the loan was repaid by someone other than the committee, the entity that repaid the loan is the donor of the contribution. The amount of the contribution is the amount of the loan that was forgiven or repaid.

Because a loan could turn into a contribution at some point in the future, loans from anyone other than a financial institution are subject to the same contribution limits that would apply to a contribution from the lender. The amount of the loan must be added to the cash and in-kind contributions from the same lender when checking to see if the lender's contribution limit has been reached. These contribution limits are discussed later in this section.

Financial institutions rarely give unsecured loans to candidate's committees. In practice, a bank will not loan money to a candidate's committee unless someone guarantees or co-signs the loan. When someone guarantees or co-signs a loan for the committee, this promise could become an actual contribution to the committee at some point in the future if the co-signer is eventually required to pay off the loan. Because of this, the amount of a loan that an individual may co-sign cannot exceed the contribution limit of the individual and counts against the contribution limit from that individual.

### **Who can give you contributions?**

You can take contributions from the following types of people:

- Individuals who are not lobbyists;
- Individuals who are lobbyists;
- General purpose political committees and political funds that are registered with the Board;
- Political party units that are registered with the Board;
- Political committees registered in Hennepin County;
- Another state candidate's committee **only** if that candidate is closing down the committee within the 12 months; and

- Groups that are not registered with the Board or Hennepin County if 1) the contribution is \$200 or less or 2) the group also gives you a disclosure form showing who gave the group money and how the group spent that money.

The disclosure form from the unregistered group must list information that is required by the campaign finance laws. The Board recommends that you not accept more than \$200 from any group not registered with the Board. If you do want to take more than \$200 from an unregistered group, be sure to consult with Board staff so that you and the donor understand the requirements before you accept the contribution.

If a group is registered with the Board, it must give you its registration number with its contribution. Because some groups forget to include their registration numbers with their contributions, you should always use the lists on the Board's website to see if the group that contributed is registered with the Board.

Remember, if a group gives you more than \$200, the group also must give you its registration number or a disclosure form.

### **Who can't give you contributions?**

Some people and groups cannot give anything to a candidate's committee. You cannot take money, things, or any other contribution from the following people or groups:

- Corporations;
- Limited liability companies (LLCs);
- Anonymous contributors unless the contribution is \$20 or less;
- State candidate campaign committees, unless the committee is terminating within the next twelve months;
- Federal or local candidate committees;
- Independent expenditure and ballot question political committees and funds; and
- Anyone who gives you money on the condition that you will give it to or use it for another candidate.

Your committee will not be able to accept contributions from most businesses because most businesses are organized as some type of corporation or LLC or are associations not registered with the Board.

## **What do you do if you accept a contribution from a prohibited source?**

If the committee deposits a contribution from a prohibited source by mistake, it must give the contribution back. If the committee returns a contribution from a prohibited source within 90 days of deposit, it does not have to include the contribution or the check returning the contribution on the committee's report and any violation associated with the contribution is cleared. The committee, however, should still record the receipt and the return of the contribution in its own records so that they will match the committee's bank statements. If the prohibited contribution is returned more than 90 days after it was deposited, the committee still must return the contribution, but the full amount of the original contribution must be included on the committee's report. The report must also include an expenditure transaction recording the return of the contribution. The violation that resulted from the prohibited contribution is not cured by returning the contribution more than 90 days after it was received and, as a result, will be dealt with by the Board. If a committee returns the actual check from a donor without depositing it, nothing is reported to the Board.

If the committee receives an anonymous contribution that is more than \$20, you must send it to the Board within 14 days. The Board will add the money to the Public Subsidy Program account. You must send the entire amount of the anonymous contribution to the Board, not just the amount over \$20.

Sometimes the committee will know the name of a donor but will not have a piece of required information, such as the donor's address or employer/occupation. The committee must try to get the missing information. If the committee cannot get the missing information, it must treat the entire contribution as an anonymous one and forward it to the Board.

A committee also can refuse or return any contribution, or any part of a contribution, for its own reasons.

## **What are the contribution limits?**

### **Limits on contributions from individuals and political committee and funds**

There are limits on the amount that one person or one political committee or fund can give to a judicial candidate's committee during a two-year period. A two-year period that ends on December 31 of a year when the judicial seat sought is on the ballot is called an election segment. Any other two-year period is called a non-election segment.

Because judicial offices have six-year terms, the election segment plus two non-election segments make up the election cycle for those offices.

For most offices, the contribution limits are higher in an election segment than they are in a non-election segment. For judicial offices, however, the contribution limit of \$2,500 is the same for election segments and for non-election segments. The \$2,500 limit applies both to one-time



contributions and to the total amount given by one person over the course of the two-year segment. Although the limits apply to contributions from individuals and from political committees and funds, the limits are commonly referred to as the individual contribution limits.

**Limits on contributions from individuals and political committees and funds to judicial candidates**

<b>Type of segment</b>	<b>Contribution limit</b>
Election segment - individual limit	\$2,500
Non-election segment - individual limit	\$2,500

There is no limit on the amount that a judicial candidate can give the candidate’s own committee.

The individual contribution limit also applies to members of the candidate’s family.

Bundled contributions are contributions delivered to the committee by someone other than the original contributor. A candidate's committee may not accept contributions delivered by a person if the total of contributions made and delivered by that person exceeds the applicable individual contribution limit.

Each individual contribution in the bundle is also treated as a contribution from the original contributor and counts against the contribution limit applicable to that contributor as well. The bundling restrictions do not apply to contributions delivered by one spouse on behalf of another or to contributions collected by a member of the candidate’s campaign committee. It is up to the candidate to determine the process for making people members of the committee. However, to avoid bundling violations, a written record of committee members should be kept.

**Aggregate political party unit and terminating candidate committee limits**

Although many judicial candidates do not accept contributions from political party units, there also is a limit on the total amount that can be given to a judicial candidate’s committee by all party units and terminating state candidate committees combined. This limit is ten times the individual contribution limit for the office sought.

**Aggregate party unit and candidate committee contribution limits**

<b>Type of segment</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Election segment limit	\$25,000
Non-election segment limit	\$25,000

### **What do you do if you accept a contribution that is more than the limits?**

A single contribution that is more than the contribution limits is called a facially excessive contribution. A committee cannot accept a facially excessive contribution unless, at the same time that the committee deposits the contribution, it also writes a check to the contributor for the excess amount of the contribution. The committee would report to the Board only the amount kept as a contribution. But the committee should record both the contribution and the refund in its own records so that they match the committee's bank statements.

If the total amount of all contributions from a donor is more than the contribution limits, the committee still must return the excess amount but it has 90 days to do so. If the committee returns the excess contribution within 90 days of deposit, it does not have to include the contribution or the check returning the contribution on the committee's report and any violation associated with the contribution is cleared. Again, the committee should still record the receipt and the return of the contribution in its own records so that they will match the committee's bank statements. If the excess contribution is returned more than 90 days after it was deposited, the committee still must return the excess amount, but the full amount of the original contribution must be included on the committee's report. The report must also include an expenditure transaction recording the return of the excess amount of the contribution. The violation that resulted from the excess contribution is not cured by returning the excess more than 90 days after it was received and, as a result, will be dealt with by the Board.

### **How should you handle joint contributions?**

Many times, people contribute to a candidate using a check written on a joint account. However, campaign finance rules do not recognize joint contributions. Every contribution must be reported as coming from one donor. This means that the treasurer must decide how to report a contribution that is received in the form of a check drawn on an account with two names on it.

When you receive a check written on a joint account, you can report the full amount of the contribution as coming from the person who signed the check. If the amount of the check puts the signer over the individual contribution limit, however, you will need to determine whether the contribution can be split between the two people named on the account.

A person may deliver a contribution on behalf of the person's spouse. If you receive a check from a joint checking account, you must first determine whether the people named on the account are a married couple. If they are, you may split the contribution between the two people if one of the following conditions is met: 1) you personally know that the check was intended to be from both spouses; or 2) you contact the person who did not sign the check to confirm that the check was intended to be from both spouses. You should make a note in your records that explains how you treated the contribution and why.

Couples who are not married may not deliver each other's contributions. If a check from two unmarried people is more than the limit that the signer could donate, it results in a contribution

limits violation. In that case, you must return to the donor the amount that exceeds the individual contribution limit.

### **What records do you have to keep?**

You must keep a record of everything given to the committee. You must keep the records for four years. The four-year period starts on the date that the report containing the information is filed with the Board. If an amendment to that report is filed, the four-year period starts on the date of the amendment. The campaign finance laws require larger contributions to be itemized on the report. Specifically, for contributions over \$200, you must list the name, address, and employer of the donor; the date and amount of the contribution; and the donor's board registration number if the donor is registered with the Board. If one donor has given multiple contributions that total more than \$200, you must itemize them all, listing each contribution separately on the report under the donor's name. Contributions from donors who have given \$200 or less, in total, should be added together and listed as a lump sum on the committee report to the Board. However, you still have to keep an internal record of each of these contributions.

Many times, an initial contribution will be too small to report as an itemized contribution. The campaign finance itemization laws, however, apply to all contributions given over the course of the year. If you do not keep good records, you will not be able to tell when a donor's total contributions reach the itemization level. The contribution limits also apply to the total of all contributions received from the same donor during a two-year period. You will need to accurately track contributions to avoid exceeding the contribution limits.

Although you should keep records of everything given to the committee, the detail of each record depends on the amount given. The specific rules are described in the sections below. There also are examples of how to record and report transactions related to some typical fundraisers in the Common Questions section of the handbook.

If you use an electronic reporting system like CFR, regularly add donation information and remember to back up your data often.

### **Contributions of \$20 or less – Cash**

For a cash contribution of \$20 or less, the only thing you must record is the amount and the date the contribution was received. You may choose to record the name of the contributor for the committee's own use. But the law does not require you to record more than the amount and date of the contribution.

If you collect money through small donations put in a jar or box, you should tell donors that if they want to donate more than \$20, they should see the treasurer so you can get their donation

information. Donations of \$20 or less collected through a donation jar are reported with other nonitemized contributions regardless of the total amount put in the jar.

### **Contributions of \$20 or less – In-kind**

You do not have to record or report anything for an in-kind contribution that is \$20 or less.

### **Contributions over \$20 but not more than \$200 – Cash and In-kind**

For all contributions over \$20 but not more than \$200, you must record the name and address of the donor, the date the contribution was received, the amount of the contribution, and, for in-kind contributions, a description of what was donated. If the donor is registered with the Board, you must record the donor's Board registration number. Registered donors must put this registration number on the contribution. If the donor does not put the registration number on the contribution, you must get the number yourself. You can contact the donor or use the registration lists on the Board's website.

### **Contributions over \$200 – Cash and In-kind**

For contributions that are more than \$200, you must record the same information required for contributions over \$20 but not more than \$200. In addition, you must record the donor's employer or, if self-employed, the donor's occupation.

You should keep your list of donors in alphabetical order by type of donor because this is how you must report the donors to the Board. For example, you will report contributions from lobbyists on one schedule and contributions from individuals on another. Each reporting period includes all contributions received during the year, not just the contributions received since the last report. If you use the Board's CFR reporting software, it will automatically keep track of your donors by type and in alphabetical order. In addition, CFR will allow you to easily comply with the requirement that reports be filed in electronic form.

Remember that the contribution limits apply to contributions given over the course of the two-year segment while the itemization requirements apply to contributions given over the course of the calendar year.

### **What penalties apply to contributions that don't follow the rules?**

The Board can charge a penalty of up to \$1,000 for the following things:

- Accepting a contribution when the committee does not have a treasurer;
- Not keeping records of contributions;
- Mixing committee funds with other money;

- Not depositing contributions promptly;
- Not giving notice that a purchase of a good or service is a contribution; and
- Accepting an anonymous contribution over \$20.

If the committee takes a contribution from a group that is not registered with the Board and the contribution is more than \$200, the Board can charge a penalty of up to four times the amount of the contribution that is over \$200.

If the committee takes a contribution that is more than the limit for that type of contribution, the Board can charge a civil penalty that is up to four times the amount by which the contribution exceeded the limits.

The Board can seek a penalty of up to \$3,000 if someone tries to get around the contribution limits by making contributions through another person or on behalf of another person.

The Board also can seek a penalty of up to \$3,000 if a person knowingly fails to keep records of contributions. The Board can impose an additional \$3,000 civil penalty on the candidate or committee that is affiliated with the person who knowingly failed to keep the contribution records. Finally, the Board can impose a penalty of up to \$3,000 if the committee takes a prohibited contribution from a corporation.

One of the most common contribution mistakes is taking a donation that is over the contribution limits.

## Spending money

### Overview

This chapter tells you what the committee can do with its money. It also covers what records to keep of your spending. You will use those records to make reports to the Board.

### Topics covered

[What can a committee do with its money?](#)

[What are the disclaimer requirements?](#)

[What are in-kind expenditures?](#)

[What is the difference between campaign expenditures and noncampaign disbursements?](#)

[What records must you keep?](#)

[What penalties apply to improper spending?](#)

### What can a committee do with its money?

Campaign committees make campaign expenditures, noncampaign disbursements, and contributions. Campaign expenditures are payments made to help a candidate get elected. There are limits on campaign spending for candidates for legislative and constitutional offices who have signed public subsidy agreements. Some things that these committees spend their money on do not count towards their spending limits. These things are called noncampaign disbursements. There is a list of noncampaign disbursements near the end of this chapter.

There are no spending limits for judicial candidates. Judicial candidates, however, still report their committee spending as campaign expenditures and noncampaign disbursements. Consequently, treasurers for judicial candidate committees still must know the difference between these two types of spending.

A judicial candidate's campaign committee also may make contributions to political parties, political committees, and political funds. A committee may make contributions to 501(c)(3) charities of \$100 per charity per year.

Money collected for political purposes cannot be used by or loaned to anyone for personal reasons. A committee also cannot make contributions to federal or local candidates.

### What are the disclaimer requirements?

All campaign material must include a disclaimer, which is a statement of attribution that tells who is responsible for producing and distributing the material. The campaign finance laws are very specific about the words that must be used in the disclaimer. When a candidate's

committee is involved with producing or distributing the campaign material, the following disclaimers must be used.

For campaign material that is distributed through broadcast media, the disclaimer must state “Paid for by the .....committee.” If the material is produced and broadcast without cost, the disclaimer must state, “The .....committee is responsible for the content of this message.”

For all other campaign material prepared and paid for by the candidate’s committee, the disclaimer must state “Prepared and paid for by the ..... committee, .....(address).” If the material is produced and distributed without cost, the words “paid for” may be omitted from the disclaimer. The address in the disclaimer must be either the committee’s mailing address or the committee’s website address if the website includes the committee’s mailing address.

For written communications other than outdoor signs, websites, or social media pages, the disclaimer must be printed in 8-point font or larger. The disclaimer requirement is satisfied for an entire website or social media page when the disclaimer appears once on the homepage of the site.

The disclaimer requirement does not apply to the following items:

- Fundraising tickets, business cards, personal letters, or similar items that are clearly being distributed by the candidate:
- Bumper sticker, pins, buttons, pens, or similar small items on which the disclaimer cannot be conveniently printed;
- Skywriting, wearing apparel, or similar items where it would be impracticable to include a disclaimer; and
- Online banner ads and similar electronic communications that link directly to another online page that includes the disclaimer.

### **What are in-kind expenditures?**

In-kind expenditures result ONLY from the committee’s receipt of in-kind contributions. They are equal and complementary. Every in-kind contribution received by your committee results in an in-kind expenditure on the date that the in-kind contribution was accepted by your committee. Approved expenditures are a type of in-kind expenditure.

Remember that the committee’s in-kind expenditures must match its in-kind contributions. For every in-kind contribution coming in, there will be a corresponding in-kind expenditure going out.

## What is the difference between campaign expenditures and noncampaign disbursements?

As discussed above, candidates for legislative and constitutional office can be bound by spending limits. The things that do not count toward the spending limits are called noncampaign disbursements. Although judicial candidates are not subject to spending limits, judicial candidates still must report spending as campaign expenditures or noncampaign disbursements. If you have questions about how to categorize an expense, contact Board staff or consult the [Guide to Noncampaign Disbursements](#) on the Board's website.

The following is the current list of noncampaign disbursements applicable to judicial candidates:

- Payment for accounting and legal services;
- Return of a contribution to the source;
- Repayment of a loan;
- Return of public subsidy;
- Payment of food, beverages, utensils and supplies, facility rental, and entertainment at a fundraising event (note that payment for advertising or invitations to a fundraising event is not a noncampaign disbursement);
- Payment of food and beverages consumed by a candidate or volunteers while engaged in campaign activities;
- Payment of candidate's expenses for serving in public office, other than for personal expenses;
- Costs of child care for candidate's children when campaigning;
- Fees, transportation, meals, and lodging paid to attend a campaign school;
- Costs of a post-election party during the election year when a candidate's name will no longer appear on a ballot or after the general election;
- Interest on loans;
- Filing fees;
- Post-general election holiday or seasonal cards, thank you notes, or ads in the news media mailed or published before the end of the election cycle;
- Costs of campaign material bought to replace defective campaign material, if the defective material is destroyed without being used;
- Costs of campaigning incurred by a person with a disability, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 363A.03, subdivision 12, and which are made necessary by the disability;
- Payments for funeral gifts or memorials;
- Costs of the candidate attending a state or national political party convention held in the state;
- Costs to an incumbent or a winning candidate of providing services to residents in the district after the general election in an election year for the office held;
- Payment of advances of credit in a year after the year in which the advance was reported as an expenditure;



- Payment of fines assessed by the Board;
- Costs paid to a third party for processing contributions made by a credit card, debit card, or electronic check;
- Funds donated by a terminating candidate committee to the state general fund or to a county obligated to incur special election expenses due to that candidate's resignation
- Costs for a party given in honor of the candidate's retirement from public office; and
- Contribution to a fund used to pay for recount costs of the candidate.

### **What records must you keep?**

You must keep records of all the committee expenditures, including unpaid expenditures, in-kind expenditures, and approved expenditures (which are a form of in-kind expenditure). Your records must include the date and amount of each expenditure. You must keep the records for four years. The four-year period starts on the date that the report containing the information is filed with the Board. If an amendment to that report is filed, the four-year period starts on the date of the amendment. The treasurer must approve all spending done by the committee. You can use the Board's CFR software to keep track of your spending. You should regularly enter your spending into CFR and back up your data often.

There is one exception to the requirement that you record every expenditure. The exception is for very small items that you purchase out of a petty cash fund. The treasurer or deputy treasurer can take up to \$100 per week from the committee's checking account and use that money to pay cash for small incidental purchases. The committee must keep a record of each withdrawal for the petty cash fund. If the withdrawals add up to more than \$100, the committee must itemize them on the committee's reports. The committee should get a receipt for each reimbursement or payment made from petty cash but does not report these individual transactions to the Board.

For both cash and in-kind expenditures, you must record the following information:

- the date and amount of the expenditure, including in-kind expenditures;
- the name and address of the vendor and the vendor's Board registration number if the vendor is registered with the Board; and
- a description of the item or service purchased, including how the item or service was used.

If you are reimbursing someone for an expense that was more than \$200 or paying a credit card bill for an expense that was more than \$200, you must keep some additional information. You must keep the information listed above for 1) the person or company that you are paying for the expense and 2) the vendor who actually sold the item or performed the service. For example, if you reimburse a volunteer who paid more than \$200 for a brochure, you must keep the following information in your records:

- the date and amount of the reimbursement expenditure;

- the fact that the payment was reimbursement for a brochure;
- the name and address of the person being reimbursed; and
- the name and address of the vendor who produced the brochure.

If you reimburse someone for vehicle use, you must report it as a campaign expenditure or a noncampaign disbursement, depending on what the person was doing while using the vehicle.

You must have an invoice or a receipt for any payment over \$100. If the committee spends more than \$200 with a vendor at one time or over the course of the year, you must itemize the payments to that vendor. Keep your records in alphabetical order by vendor because that is how you must report your expenditures to the Board. If you use the CFR software, it will automatically group payments to a vendor and sort vendors alphabetically.

You also should keep separate records for campaign spending and for non-campaign spending. You must report these two types of spending separately to the Board.

The date that a campaign expenditure or noncampaign disbursement is reportable is the date when the committee made the commitment to spend the money, not when the bill was actually paid. An expenditure that has not been paid at the reporting date must be listed as an unpaid bill.

The date that an in-kind expenditure was made is the date that the committee accepted the in-kind contribution of goods or the date that in-kind services were actually provided. The vendor for the in-kind expenditure is the donor of the corresponding in-kind contribution.

Approved expenditures made on the candidate's behalf are both in-kind contributions and in-kind expenditures. For example, if an entity provided phone banks for the candidate, the committee would report this contribution as an in-kind contribution and an in-kind expenditure on the date that the services were provided. Also, before an entity goes ahead with an approved expenditure, the treasurer or the candidate must approve the expense in writing. The written permission should describe what the donor is going to do for the committee, when it will happen, and how much the donor can spend. This writing should be kept with the committee's other records.

Remember that approved expenditures must be approved in advance and in writing by the treasurer or the candidate and that the writing must state the amount that can be spent and the reason for the spending.

## **What penalties apply to improper spending?**

The Board can charge a penalty of up to \$1,000 for the following things:

- Spending money when the committee does not have a treasurer;
- Not keeping records of spending; and
- Mixing committee funds with other money.

The Board also can seek a penalty of up to \$3,000 if a person knowingly fails to keep records of expenditures. The Board can impose an additional \$3,000 civil penalty on the candidate or committee that is affiliated with the person who knowingly failed to keep the expenditure records.

The Board can impose a penalty of up to \$3,000 if someone converts committee funds to personal use and can bring a legal action to recover the converted funds. The Board also can impose a penalty of up to \$3,000 for violations of the disclaimer requirement.

## Reporting to the Board

### Overview

This chapter tells you how to use your records to file reports with the Board. It also tells you when those reports are due. You can use the Board's free CFR software to keep your records and make your reports. If you use the CFR software, it automatically fills out all of the report schedules for you.

### Topics covered

- When do you need to file reports with the Board?
- What are the special reporting requirements just before an election (24-hour notice reports)?
- How do you report to the Board?
- How do you get an exemption from the electronic filing requirement?
- How do you report if you still file a paper form?
- How do you find registration numbers for contributors registered with the Board?
- How do you decide if money received by your committee should be reported as a contribution or as income?
- How do you decide if a payment made by your committee should be reported as an expenditure or a contribution?
- What do you report to the Board?
- How do you fix mistakes on a report?
- What penalties apply to reporting?

### When do you need to file reports with the Board?

The reports that you file with the Board are like bank statements. They show the amount of money that the committee started with at the beginning of the year, the receipts and spending that have come in and gone out of the committee during the year, and the amount of money that the committee has left at the end of the year.

In a non-election year, you must file one report for the entire year. This report is due on January 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year. The 2017 year-end report is due on January 31, 2018.

In an election year, a candidate for district court judicial office must file three reports with the Board. In 2018: those reports are due according to the following schedule:

Pre-primary-election report:	July 30, 2018 (15 days before the primary)
Pre-general-election report:	October 29, 2018 (10 days before the general election)
Year-end report:	By January 31, 2019

The committee of a candidate for district court judicial office who did not file for office does not have to file the pre-primary-election report. A candidate for a district court judicial office whose name will not appear on the general election ballot does not have to file the pre-general-election report.

In an election year, a candidate for an appellate court judicial office must file six reports with the Board. In 2018, these reports are due according to the following schedule:

First quarter report:	April 16, 2018
June report:	June 14, 2018
Pre-primary-election report:	July 30, 2018 (15 days before the primary)
42-day pre-general-election report:	September 25, 2018
10-day pre-general-election report:	October 29, 2018
Year-end report:	By January 31, 2019

The committee of a candidate for appellate court judicial office who did not file for office does not have to file the June report or the pre-primary-election report. A candidate for an appellate court judicial office whose name will not appear on the general election ballot does not have to file the 42-day pre-general-election report or the 10-day pre-general-election report.

A calendar with all the reporting dates is available on the Board's website. Remember that late fees begin without notice on the day after a report is due.

Each report filed with the Board covers the time period from the beginning of the year to the cut-off date for the report. The cut-off date for a report is seven days before the report is due, except that the cut-off date for the year-end report is December 31<sup>st</sup>. The beginning balance on every report is always the ending balance from the previous year's report. Because each report covers the entire year up to the date of the report, you will repeat some of the committee's earlier receipt and spending entries on its later reports.

You must file reports every year until the committee closes, even if the committee does not collect or spend any money during the year.

### **What are the reporting requirements just before an election (24-hour notice reports)?**

During election years, there is a gap between the last date for transactions included on the pre-primary-election report and the date of the primary election. There is another gap between the last date for transactions included on the pre-general-election report and the general election. During these two time periods, you must report to the Board any large contributions that you receive. The size of the contribution that triggers the notice requirement is different for each office.

### 24-hour notice triggers

Office	Amount that triggers notice requirement
District Court	More than \$400
Appellate Court	More than \$2,000

The report is due within 24 hours after you receive the large contribution if you file it electronically or by fax. The report is due by 4:30 p.m. the next business day if you file it in person. You may not file this report by U.S. Mail. The triggering amount is the total of all contributions received from the same donor during the 24-hour notice period. You don't count contributions received before the beginning of the period because they will be included on your pre-election report.

There are two exceptions to the 24-hour notice requirement. A candidate who is unopposed in the primary election does not need to file a 24-hour notice for a large contribution received during the pre-primary-election 24-hour notice period. A candidate whose name will not be on the general election ballot does not need to file a 24-hour notice for a large contribution received during the pre-general-election 24-hour notice period.

The CFR software application will notify you if you have a 24-hour notice due and will guide you through the filing of the notice. The Board also has an on-line reporting system for these large contributions. It is called the 24-Hour On-Line Notice System. You can use this system to report large contributions even if you do not use the Board's CFR software. The Board gives all registered committees a username and password and a web link to access the system.

For 2018, the 24-hour notice requirement is in effect during the following periods:

### 24-hour notice periods

Election	First day in effect	Last day in effect
Primary	July 24	August 13
General	October 23	November 5

The 24-hour notice period is based on the date that the committee receives the contribution. If a contribution is given to the candidate or to a committee member, it is received on that date. That means that it is important for everyone who receives contributions on behalf of the committee to notify the treasurer of every contribution during the 24-hour notice period. If they do not, a reporting violation may occur because the treasurer did not know about the contribution.

The 24-hour notice report is a report filed with the Board, just like your regular reports. For that reason, it is subject to the same penalty for late filing, which is \$50 per day. If a treasurer does not manage the 24-hour notice requirement carefully, late fees of \$1,000 per unfiled 24-hour notice can easily result.

## **How do you report to the Board?**

You must file your reports electronically. The Board will make an exception for your committee if you show that you have a good reason for not filing electronically.

If you are using the Board's free CFR software to keep your records, you also can use the software to generate the required reports and send them electronically to the Board. CFR incorporates the campaign finance requirements. As you enter your records, it will alert you to possible mistakes. If you enter records regularly, you should have time to fix your mistakes before the time limit has passed. The Board holds periodic training classes on the use of the software. The Board website has a current list of [training opportunities](#). The training offered by the Board and [online tutorials](#) on the Board's website explain the step-by-step process for creating and filing a report using CFR.

You can use other campaign finance software to keep your records and report to the Board as long as the software meets the Board's requirements.

## **How do you get an exemption from the electronic filing requirement?**

If you think you have a good reason for not filing electronically, you can request a waiver from the requirement. Committees that do very little spending often ask for waivers. You can ask for a waiver by filling out the [waiver request](#) that is available on the Board's website. The Board will tell you if the waiver is granted. If it is, you can continue to file paper reports.

## **How do you report if you still file a paper form?**

If the committee has a waiver to report using a paper form, you may send your report to the Board by fax, by U.S. mail, or as an attachment to an electronic mail. If you fax the report, you should keep a copy of the transmittal confirmation to show that you sent the report on time. Even home faxes usually have a way to print a transmission report. If the Board does not receive the fax by the filing deadline and the committee does not have a transmittal confirmation, the committee's report will be considered to be late.

Paper reports must comply with all the legal requirements for committee reports. You should **read the instructions** for completing each schedule before you start to fill them in. You should complete the schedules before you fill out the summary page. On the schedules, contributions and expenditures must be grouped by source or vendor. Donors and vendors must be reported alphabetically when itemization is required. The report must include all transactions from January 1 through the cutoff date of the reporting period.

Paper reports also must be clearly legible even in a scanned image. If the report is not legible, the treasurer will be required to re-do the report and to resubmit it. The Board has also developed an information sheet that tells treasurers about the most common problems with paper filings. This [information sheet](#) is available on the Board's website.

## How do you find registration numbers for contributors registered with the Board

If a lobbyist, party unit, political committee, or political fund that is registered with the Board gives your committee money and the contribution is greater than the itemization threshold, you must report the contributor's Board registration number with the contribution. The lobbyist, party unit, political committee, or political fund is required to include its registration number with its contribution. Use the registration number provided by the contributor for your records.

If no registration number was provided with the contribution, it can be difficult to determine which lobbyist, party unit, committee, or fund was the actual source of contribution. For example, political committees and funds may have similar names or may use different names on their checks than the names that are on the Board registration list.

If you use CFR, enter the contribution using the registration number provided and the system will fill in the contributor's correct committee name.

Finding the correct registration number is important because if you don't use the correct number on your report, Board staff may not be able to match contributions on the reports filed by the donor and the recipient. This may result in your being required to amend your report to correct the error.

If there is no registration number with a contribution from a group, check the lists of registered entities on the Board's website or contact Board staff for help. You also can contact the entity that made the contribution to ask for its registration number.

If your committee makes a contribution to another group registered with the Board, you must give that entity your committee's registration number. On your report, you must include the correct registration number for the party unit or the committee or fund to which your committee gave money.

## How do you decide if money received by your committee should be reported as a contribution or as income?

Money received by your committee is reported either as a contribution to the committee or as miscellaneous income. Almost all of the money received by a principal campaign committee should be reported as contributions but there are a few exceptions to this general rule. Here are some common receipts and how they should be reported.

Transaction	How to report transaction
Money received for tickets to a fundraiser	Contribution
Money received for a table sponsorship at a fundraiser	Contribution



<b>Transaction</b>	<b>How to report transaction</b>
Money given to reimburse your committee for another candidate's share of the cost of a good or service, such as a mailing or a fundraiser	Miscellaneous income
Money received as a refund because the committee paid for a good or service that it never received	Miscellaneous income
Interest paid on the committee's bank account	Miscellaneous income
Proceeds from selling something at a silent or live auction	Contribution
Item given to your committee to sell at an auction	Contribution
Refund of a security deposit	Miscellaneous income

**How to decide if a payment made by your committee should be reported as an expenditure or as a contribution to another registered entity.**

Money paid out by your committee is reported either as an expenditure (campaign or noncampaign) or as a contribution. Money paid to other entities registered with the Board is the only type of payment that is ever reported as a contribution. All other payments are reported as expenditures. Here are some common payments and how they should be reported.

<b>Transaction</b>	<b>How to report transaction</b>
Money paid to a committee or fund registered with the Board for tickets to a convention or dinner	Contribution
Payment to a committee registered with the Board for a table sponsorship at an event	Contribution
Payment to a group not registered with the Board for sponsorship of an event	Expenditure
Money given to a 501(3)(c) charity	Expenditure
Money used to pay for the candidate's attendance at a civic organization dinner	Expenditure
Money you returned to a contributor more than 90 days after deposit of the contribution	Expenditure

**What do you report to the Board?**

You report the committee's receipts and spending to the Board. Each report has a summary section where you show

- the total amount given to the committee by each type of donor;
- the total amount spent by the committee for campaign purposes, non-campaign purposes, and contributions; and
- the total amount loaned to the committee outright or in the form of unpaid bills.

The report also has a section where you list more details about contributions that the committee received from each type of donor. For example, you list contributions from lobbyists on Schedule A1 – LOB - Contributions by Lobbyists. There are other schedules for contributions from individuals and from political committees. You use the Schedule B forms to list spending by category. Finally, there are forms to report the details of loans and unpaid bills.

The amount of detail that you report on each form depends on the amount of the contribution or the spending.

If you use the CFR software, you don't need to worry about the schedules or the summary. CFR fills them out automatically based on the receipts and expenditures you entered. Before you send your report to the Board, you can look at it on your computer or print it out so that you can see exactly what your filed report will contain.

Paper filers will need to review the instructions included with the paper forms and the information sheet about common paper filing problems before filing reports. This review will help paper filers to correctly fill out each schedule and the summary and make sure that the report meets the requirements for a paper filing.

The Common Questions section of the handbook describes how to report transactions that arise during a typical fundraiser.

## **Contributions**

In this section, when we talk about the contribution amount, we mean the total of all contributions received from the same donor. For example, if a donor buys a fundraiser ticket for \$75 and later makes a cash contribution of \$150, the contribution amount is \$225 and the contributions will be itemized. Apply the rules below to the total amount contributed by a donor, not to each individual contribution from the same donor.

You do not have to report anything for in-kind contributions from one donor that are \$20 or less. You also should exclude in-kind contributions of \$20 or less when calculating the total amount given by a donor.

Contributions from donors who each gave \$200 or less – Cash and in-kind total:

- Add the in-kind contributions together.
- Add the cash contributions together.
- Report the **total amount** of the in-kind contributions in the in-kind column on the nonitemized line on the bottom of the schedule.
- Report the **total amount** of the cash contributions in the cash column on the nonitemized line on the bottom of the schedule.
- Do not list the donors separately.
- Do not list these small contributions as miscellaneous income.

Contributions from one donor of more than \$200 – Cash and in-kind total:

- Report each contribution individually.
- Report the date received and the donor's name, address, and employer or occupation.

- Report in-kind contributions in the in-kind column and cash contributions in the cash column.
- List the donors in alphabetical order.
- If a donor made more than one contribution, list each contribution separately under the donor's first entry on your report
- Include the registration number of any donor registered with the Board.

Don't report receipts from fundraisers as "miscellaneous income." They are contributions from the people who came to the fundraiser.

## Expenditures

For this section, the expenditure amount is the total of all payments made to the same vendor. For example, if you bought office supplies for \$60 and later bought more supplies from the same vendor for \$150, the expenditure amount for that vendor is \$210 and the expenditures will be itemized. Apply the rules below to the vendor totals, not to each individual payment made to the same vendor.

Vendors or suppliers to whom you have made expenditures of \$200 or less

- Add the campaign expenditures together and report the **total amount** on the nonitemized line on the campaign expenditure schedule.
- Add the noncampaign disbursements together and report the **total amount** on the nonitemized line on the noncampaign disbursement schedule.
- Do not list the payments individually.

Vendors or suppliers to whom you have made expenditures of more than \$200

- List the vendor name, address, and Board registration number if the vendor is registered with the Board with the first expenditure to that vendor reported on the schedule.
- Report each additional payment individually on the schedule below the vendor's entry.
- Report the date and amount of the payment.
- Describe the item or service bought and how the item or service was used. The description must be specific enough so that people looking at the report can tell what was bought with the payment.
- List the vendors in alphabetical order on the report.
- If the payment was made to reimburse someone or to pay a credit card bill, you must report using either of the following two methods. (1) You can report the expenditure as if it were paid directly to the vendor who sold the goods or services; listing the vendor as the payee instead of the person you reimbursed. Under this option, you will keep your own records showing that this payment was actually a reimbursement and to whom it was paid. (2) Under the second method, you can report the name and address of the

person you are reimbursing as the payee and describe the item originally purchased. Under this option, if you are reimbursing someone for an item that cost more than \$200, you must also include the name and address of the vendor from whom the person being reimbursed bought the item. If you are reimbursing an individual for more than one expenditure, list the underlying vendors in alphabetical order under the name of the person being reimbursed.

If you have questions about how to report a contribution or a payment, you can contact the Board for help.

The other disbursements schedule is used only for the payment of security deposits and payments to charities. If you have something else recorded on this schedule, you might have made a data entry error or recorded something incorrectly. Call the Board for help.

### **How do you fix mistakes on a report?**

After you have filed a report with the Board, you might discover that the report is incorrect or missing some information. After you discover the error, you have 10 days to file an amended report with the Board. If you feel that you will need more than 10 days to research a problem or gather bank records, contact the Board. The Board will provide limited extensions to the amendment period for good cause.

### **What penalties apply to reporting?**

The Board can charge a fee for late reports. The late fee is \$25 per day for year-end reports and \$50 per day for the other pre-election reports, up to a maximum of \$1,000. The late fees begin the day after the report is due, without notice. Please be sure to keep the reporting deadlines on your calendar. The late fee also applies to notices of large contributions that must be filed during each 24-hour notice period.

The Board can charge a penalty of up to \$1,000 for the following things:

- Not sending in a report after the Board has told the committee that it is overdue;
- Not sending in an amended report after the Board has told you to do so;
- Not sending in information requested by the Board to reconcile discrepancies between reported by the donor and the recipient; and
- Failing to keep records of contributions and spending

The Board can seek a penalty of up to \$3,000 for the following things:

- Signing and certifying a report to be true when the person knows that it contains false information or omits required information;
- Knowingly providing false or incomplete information to a treasurer with the intent that the treasurer rely on that information to certify the report;
- Knowingly failing to keep records of contributions and expenditures;
- Willfully failing to file an amended report; and
- Willfully failing to cooperate with the Board to reconcile a report discrepancy.

The Board also can impose an additional \$3,000 civil penalty on the candidate or committee affiliated with a person who

- Falsely certified a report;
- Provided false information to the treasurer; or
- Knowingly failed to keep records of contributions and spending.

## After the election

### Overview

This chapter tells you what happens to the committee and its money after the election. It also tells you how to terminate the committee.

### Topics covered

[How do you terminate the committee?](#)

[What penalties apply to committees after the election?](#)

### How do you terminate the committee?

A committee cannot stop operating until 1) it has \$100 or less in cash and property; and 2) it has submitted a termination report to the Board. A committee can terminate its registration with the Board even if it has unpaid debts. The committee's termination, however, does not affect the liability of the committee, the candidate, or the committee's officers for the unpaid debts.

The committee cannot give its assets away to anyone for personal use. The committee can sell its assets to anyone at fair market value, including the candidate. If the candidate is running for another state-level office, the committee's debts can be transferred to the candidate's new committee. Assets can be transferred to the new state-level committee subject to the limits on transfers from party units and terminating candidate committees.

To reduce its assets, the committee also can make contributions to political parties, political committees, and political funds. A committee that is terminating within the next 12 months can make contributions to other state-level candidates but can never give money to federal or local candidates. A committee that is terminating within 12 months also can make unlimited contributions to charities organized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. When the committee donates money to other state candidates, you must tell the recipient in writing that the committee is terminating.

If you contribute to a candidate committee, make sure you use that committee's correct registration number on your report.

When the committee has \$100 or less, you can terminate its registration by sending a termination report to the Board. The termination report is just like a regular report except that it covers from January 1 of the termination year through the date the committee stopped operating. Terminating the committee's registration with the Board means that no further reports will be required.

The treasurer or candidate must keep the committee's records for four years after it terminates.

It is not unusual for candidate committees to be inactive for an election cycle while a candidate decides whether to run again. But there is a limit on how long the committee may stay registered without activity. A committee must stop operating and terminate its registration when 1) it has been six years since the last election that the candidate ran in; or 2) it has been six years since the day that the candidate left office.

The Board will notify a committee if it must terminate. The committee then has 60 days to dispose of its assets and send in the termination report.

If the candidate is planning to run again for the same office, you can ask the Board for permission to keep the committee active beyond the six year limit.

### **What penalties apply to committees after the election?**

The Board can charge a penalty of up to \$1,000 for not keeping records for four years

If the committee does not terminate within 12 months after giving money to another candidate's committee, the Board can charge a penalty of up to four times the amount of each contribution made to another candidate's committee. If the committee gives more than the contribution limits to another candidate's committee, the Board can charge a penalty of up to four times the amount that the contribution exceeded the limits.

## Common questions

### Overview

This chapter describes some important things that are not covered in detail in the previous sections. It also tells you how to report some common transactions that occur during fundraisers.

### Topics covered

[Getting on the ballot](#)

[Economic interest statements](#)

[Getting a federal tax ID number for political purposes](#)

[How do you find registration numbers for contributors registered with the Board?](#)

[How do you decide if money received by your committee should be reported as a contribution or as income?](#)

[How do you decide if a payment made by your committee should be reported as an expenditure or as a contribution to another registered entity?](#)

[Fundraising reporting examples](#)

[Joint fundraising events](#)

[Conducting raffles or drawings](#)

[Conducting auctions](#)

[Having policies to help control your money](#)

[Criminal penalties](#)

### Getting on the ballot

Nothing that you do with the Board actually gets the candidate's name on the ballot. That is because the Office of the Secretary of State handles the election process. The Board only handles financial and disclosure matters. Candidates typically get on the ballot by filing an affidavit of candidacy to run for office during a specified filing period. The requirements are technical and you have to follow them correctly. The candidate should review materials produced by the Secretary of State and contact that office if there are questions. The [Secretary's website](#) has more information about what a candidate must do to get the candidate's name on the ballot.

When the candidate files with the Secretary of State or a county filing officer to get on the ballot, the filing officer will give the candidate a packet of materials from the Board. It is very important that the candidate reads everything in this packet.

### Economic interest statements

An economic interest statement (EIS) shows who employs the person completing the form, where the person owns non-homesteaded property in Minnesota, the person's investments in



stocks and mutual funds, and whether the person has any financial interests in horseracing. Judges who take office on or after January 1, 2014, must file a completed EIS with the Board within 60 days of assuming their duties. The Board puts information from the completed EIS on its website to make it easier for people to know when an elected official could have a conflict of interest.

If the judge does not timely file the EIS, the Board will charge a fee of \$5 for each day that the EIS is late. If the judge does not file the EIS after the Board has given notice that it is due, the Board can charge an additional civil penalty.

### **How to get a federal tax ID number (EIN) for political purposes.**

1. Go to the [EIN online application](#) on the IRS website.
2. When asked for the type of organization, check the bottom button for “other” types of organizations.
3. On the next page, select “Political Organization”
4. When asked for the reason for the EIN, select “Banking Purposes”
5. The responsible person is an “individual” who should probably be the candidate for a candidate committee so that you don’t have to change it every time the treasurer changes.
6. When asked, the person should indicate that they are an authorized officer of the entity.
7. For the legal name, use the committee’s name. The Board recommends that the committee’s name include the full name of the candidate.
8. Check the button that says you will NOT be filing the form 8871. This form is not filed by state candidate committees.
9. When asked if you will need employee forms, select “No”. (Unless your committee will actually have paid employees. If you fall into this category, seek legal assistance.)
10. When asked how you wish to receive your number, by mail or online, select online. Otherwise you can wait weeks to get the number.
11. Review and print your application information. If it is all correct, click the Submit button.

### **How do you find registration numbers for contributors registered with the Board**

If a lobbyist, party unit, political committee, or political fund that is registered with the Board gives your committee money and the contribution is greater than the itemization threshold, you must report the contributor’s Board registration number with the contribution. The lobbyist, party unit, political committee, or political fund is required to include its registration number with its contribution. Use the registration number provided by the contributor for your records.

If no registration number was provided with the contribution, it can be difficult to determine which lobbyist, party unit, committee, or fund was the actual source of contribution. For example, political committees and funds may have similar names or may use different names on their checks than the names that are on the Board registration list.

Finding the correct registration number is important because if you don't use the correct number on your report, the Board staff may not be able to match contributions on the reports filed by the donor and recipient. This may result in your being required to amend your report to correct the error.

If there is no registration number with a contribution from a group, check the lists of registered entities on the Board's website or contact Board staff for help. You also can contact the entity that made the contribution to ask for its registration number.

If your committee makes a contribution to another group registered with the Board, you must give that entity your committee's registration number. On your report, you also must include the correct registration number for the party unit or the committee or fund to which your committee gave money.

**How do you decide if money received by your committee should be reported as a contribution or as income?**

Money received by your committee is reported either as a contribution to the committee or as miscellaneous income. Almost all of the money received by a principal campaign committee should be reported as contributions but there are a few exceptions to this general rule. Here are some common receipts and how they should be reported.

<b>Transaction</b>	<b>How to report transaction</b>
Money received for tickets to a fundraiser	Contribution
Money received for a table sponsorship at a fundraiser	Contribution
Money given to reimburse your committee for another candidate's share of the cost of a good or service, such as a mailing or a fundraiser	Miscellaneous income
Money received as a refund because the committee paid for a good or service that it never received	Miscellaneous income
Interest paid on the committee's bank account	Miscellaneous income
Proceeds from selling something at a silent or live auction	Contribution
Item given to your committee to sell at an auction	Contribution
Refund of a security deposit	Miscellaneous income

**How to decide if a payment made by your committee should be reported as an expenditure or as a contribution to another registered entity.**

Money paid out by your committee is reported either as an expenditure (campaign or noncampaign) or as a contribution. Money paid to other entities registered with the Board is the

only type of payment that is ever reported as a contribution. All other payments are reported as expenditures. Here are some common payments and how they should be reported.

<b>Transaction</b>	<b>How to report transaction</b>
Money paid to a committee registered with the Board for tickets to a convention or dinner	Contribution
Payment to a committee or fund registered with the Board for a table sponsorship at an event	Contribution
Payment to a group not registered with the Board for sponsorship of an event	Expenditure
Money given to a 501(3)(c) charity	Expenditure
Money used to pay for the candidate's attendance at a civic organization dinner	Expenditure
Money you returned to a contributor more than 90 days after deposit of the contribution	Expenditure

### **Fundraising reporting examples**

All money received from a fundraiser attendee is a contribution, regardless of whether the attendee received food and beverages, entertainment, or benefits such as a golf outing. The only way that you can exclude fees from the attendee's contribution is if the fees were paid directly to the provider of the services, such when the attendee paid the greens fees directly to the golf course.

The examples below explain recordkeeping and reporting for a typical fundraising event and for a golf tournament.

The committee holds a reception and dinner as a fundraiser. Tickets to the reception alone are \$20 and tickets to the dinner are \$125. Anyone who pays \$250 or more can attend a private reception with the candidate. Food and beverages are provided to the people who attend.

The committee must keep records of all the money collected at the fundraiser as contributions. The committee also must keep records of any goods or services donated for the fundraiser. The details recorded will depend on the amount of the contribution.

For contributions of \$20 or less, the committee must record only the total amount received. The committee does not need to record any donor information for these small contributions.

For contributions of more than \$20 to \$200, the committee must record the name and address of the donor along with any Board registration number.

For contributions of more than \$200, the committee must record the donor's name, address, Board registration number, if any, and employer or occupation.

All the costs related to the fundraiser count as spending for the committee holding the event. The payments for the food, beverages, utensils and supplies, facility rental, and entertainment, or the value of those items if they were donated, are recorded as non-campaign spending. Any other expenses, such as invitations and postage, are recorded as campaign spending.

For all cash and in-kind expenditures, you must record the following information:

- the date and amount of the payment or in-kind expenditure;
- the name and address of the vendor;
- a description of the item or service purchased; and
- the Board registration number of any entity to which you make a payment.

If the committee holds a golf tournament fundraiser and charges \$200 per person, the committee would report the entire \$200 as a contribution. The committee would not deduct the cost of greens fees or cart rentals from the \$200. Instead, the committee would report these expenses as non-campaign spending. If attendees pay their greens fees directly to the golf course, those fees do not count as contributions to the committee. The golf course cannot offer reduced greens fees that are not available to other groups. If the golf course did offer reduced fees, it would be a contribution to the candidate's committee from a corporation, which is against the law.

### **Joint fundraising events**

If the committee holds a fundraiser with another candidate's committee, you must be careful not to break the rule against accepting a contribution earmarked for another candidate and the rule against making transfers to another state-level candidate's committee. You should make it clear which candidate is getting the contribution by doing things such as setting up separate contribution tables for each candidate or giving donors a receipt with the candidate's name. The costs of the fundraiser have to be split between the candidates according to each candidate's share of the fundraiser's proceeds. For example, if one candidate received 40% of the total contributions, that candidate's committee must pay 40% of the event's campaign expenditures and 40% of the event's noncampaign disbursements. The division must be done separately for campaign expenditures and noncampaign disbursements. If one candidate pays more than his or her share, reimbursements may be made after the event as long as clear and complete records are kept to explain the finances of the event.

### **Conducting raffles or drawings**

Raffles could be considered charitable gambling and might not be legal for a political fundraiser. You should read "[Frequently Asked Questions about Raffles, Lawful Gambling, and Political Campaign Financing](#)." This is a flyer put out by the Gambling Control Board, which regulates charitable gambling. It is available on the Board's website. You also can call the Gambling Control Board at (651) 639-4000 if you are considering having a raffle or a drawing as part of a fundraiser.

## Conducting auctions

When the committee collects goods for an auction, remember the following things:

- Don't accept any contributions from corporations, either directly or indirectly;
- Don't accept contributions worth more than \$200 from groups that are not registered with the Board unless the group gives you a financial disclosure form; and
- Be aware of how a contribution could affect the committee's contribution limits.

When the committee holds an auction, the items donated for the auction are in-kind contributions to the committee from the people who give the items. You must record every in-kind contribution that is more than \$20. The items must be valued at fair market value. You must add the value of all items given by a person to determine the amount of that person's contribution. You cannot treat each item separately.

If the total value of the item or items donated is less than \$20, you do not have to keep a record of the item(s). You may wish to keep a record for internal committee reasons.

If the value of the donated item is more than \$20, you must record the donor's name and address and Board registration number. If the donated item is worth more than \$200, you also must record the donor's employer or occupation.

A best practice tip is to create a contribution receipt form that has space for all the required information. On the form, you can tell people to give employment information only if the contribution is more than \$200.

Each item donated to the committee for the auction that is worth more than \$20 also must be recorded as an in-kind expenditure. The vendor for the expenditure is the person who donated the item. The value is the fair market value of the item, which should be the same as the value of the corresponding in-kind contribution. You also must describe the item in the committee's records. The date of the expenditure is the same date as the date of its receipt.

A best practice tip is to record both the in-kind receipt and the in-kind expenditure at the time the item is accepted.

Fair market value is the price that someone would pay for the item in the open market. It does not include a premium that a person might pay for the item to help the seller.

The sale of the auction items is totally separate from the collection of those items. Everyone who buys something at the auction has made a cash contribution to the committee holding the auction. Record these purchases as cash contributions. Do not reduce the amount of the contribution by the value of the item bought. You do not need to report the item bought to the Board but you may want to keep these records for internal purposes.

## **Having policies to help control your money**

It can be hard to keep track of contributions collected during fundraisers and for auctions. It is very important for the treasurer to keep control over these events. If more than one person will be collecting contributions at a fundraiser, for an auction, or just in the ordinary course of the committee's work, the treasurer should make sure that these people get the required information from the donors. A best practice tip is to create a receipt for every contribution. The receipt should include the donor's name, address, employment information, and Board registration number along with the date and amount of the contribution. The person collecting the contribution for the committee should keep a copy of the receipt and give a copy to the donor. The treasurer should collect the copies of these receipts as soon as possible. All money and contributions also should be given to the treasurer right away. The treasurer also should keep any records related to fundraisers such as the bid sheet for an auction.

A committee should have policies that ensure that the treasurer is the person in control of the money and that the money in the bank always balances out with the money shown on reports filed with the Board.

## **Criminal penalties**

Some violations of the campaign finance laws can be criminally prosecuted. For these violations, the Board could refer the matter to the Attorney General or to a county attorney. The attorney general or the county attorney would decide whether the matter should be charged as a crime. The Board itself does not charge or prosecute criminal matters.

Some of the violations that carry possible criminal penalties are listed in this handbook. In addition, the following violations of campaign finance laws may be charged as crimes:

- Filing a registration form knowing that it contains false information or omits required information;
- Knowingly providing false or incomplete information to a treasurer with the intent that the treasurer will use that information in certifying a report;
- Trying to get around the contribution limits by making contributions through another person or on behalf of another person;
- Participating in the preparation or distribution of campaign materials that do not include the required disclaimer;
- Helping someone to violate the laws prohibiting corporate contributions; and
- Knowingly failing to keep records.

## Getting help

### Overview

This chapter tells you how to get help from the Board.

### Topics covered

[What is the role of Advisory Opinions?](#)

[Complaints](#)

[How do you contact the Board?](#)

### What is the role of Advisory Opinions?

The Board on occasion issues advisory opinions that provide the Board's interpretation of a statutory provision. Over the years, the Board has issued over 400 [advisory opinions](#) that can be viewed and searched on the Board website. If you have a question about an advisory opinion, or wish to discuss the process for requesting an opinion from the Board, contact Board staff.

### Complaints

The Board enforces campaign finance laws by reviewing reports that people file with it. Of course, not all problems with campaign finances show up on filed reports. If you have reason to believe that a committee is not reporting accurately to the Board, or in some other way has broken the campaign finance laws, you can file a complaint with the Board. If the complaint is about an activity under the Board's jurisdiction, and evidence is provided to show that the complaint has a reasonable basis, the Board will investigate. The information concerning the complaint is private until the Board publishes its decision.

### How do you contact the Board?

At the beginning of this handbook, we told you that we wouldn't try to answer every possible question you might have. We encourage you to call or e-mail the Board for help. We want your experience running a candidate's committee to be successful, and Board staff will try their best to provide you with the information you need for that to happen.

The Board has two email distribution lists that will keep you informed of campaign finance issues and updates to CFR. To subscribe to these lists, go to the Board's website and select "Citizen Resources."

## Staff Members

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## Who to Call for Help

Board information	(651) 539-1189
Registration for all Programs	(651) 539-1187
Campaign finance reporting	(651) 539-1188
Lobbyists reporting	(651) 539-1187
Economic interest statements	(651) 539-1184
Public subsidy	(651) 539-1189
Advisory Opinions	(651) 539-1189
Campaign finance software	(651) 539-1185
Forms, general information	(651) 539-1180
All staff may also be reached at	(800) 657-3889



## **Email the board**

Registration and reports  
Economic interest statements  
General questions or comments

[cfb.reports@state.mn.us](mailto:cfb.reports@state.mn.us)  
[cfb.eis@state.mn.us](mailto:cfb.eis@state.mn.us)  
[cf.board@state.mn.us](mailto:cf.board@state.mn.us)

## **You may also contact the Board as follows:**

By telephone at (651) 539-1180 or toll free (800) 657-3889.  
By TTY by calling (800) 627-3529 and asking for (651) 539-1180.  
By fax to (651) 539-1196 or fax toll free (800) 357-4114.

By United States mail to:      Campaign Finance & Public Disclosure Board  
   190 Centennial Office Building  
   658 Cedar Street  
   St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-1603