



Public subsidy program

Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

What is the public subsidy program?

The public subsidy program consists of two components: (1) direct public subsidy payments; and (2) the political contribution refund program.

How do you participate in the public subsidy program?

In order to receive direct public subsidy payments a candidate must: (1) register a principal campaign committee with the Board and sign a public subsidy agreement for the election cycle; (2) raise the required threshold in qualifying contributions; (3) file an affidavit of contributions with the Board by the due date of the pre-primary-election report, certifying that the candidate's committee raised the required threshold in qualifying contributions; (4) file the committee's pre-primary-election report with the Board; and (5) win the primary election. In order to participate in the political contribution refund program a candidate only needs to register a principal campaign committee with the Board and sign a public subsidy agreement for the election cycle.

How much will my committee receive in direct public subsidy payments?

The amount varies by committee because the payments come from two sources of funds. First, major party candidates receive money from a general account appropriation that is divided equally by all candidates of major political parties running for a specified office. Second, candidates affiliated with any political party receive a party account payment from the pool of money designated for their party by tax check off. The Department of Revenue tracks these funds by district and party. The first estimate of payments for the next election is posted to the Board's website in May of the election year.

When is the payment made?

Two payments are made to committees that qualify for direct public subsidy payments. These payments are made directly to the candidate. The first payment is much larger and is made within one week of the Board receiving the official primary election results from the state canvassing board. If the candidate has an opponent in the primary election, he or she must win the primary to receive a payment. The payment will be withheld for any candidate's committee that has not filed the pre-primary-election report. The second payment is much smaller and is made in December.

What can I do with the money?

Before the end of the election year, the committee is required to have campaign expenditures that are equal to or greater than the amount of direct public subsidy payments received. In short, the committee must actually spend the public subsidy money to promote the candidate's election. Any unspent public subsidy money at the end of the year must be returned to the State.

What is the political contribution refund program?

Eligible Minnesota voters who contribute to a registered political party unit or to a candidate who has signed the public subsidy agreement are eligible to apply for a refund of their contribution.

Only cash contributions (not goods or services) qualify for the refund. The maximum refund that contributors may receive is \$75 per person, or \$150 for married couples, per year. An individual may file only one refund application per year. Committees can print refund receipts for contributors with the Board's Campaign Finance Reporter Online application and physical copies of the receipt forms can also be obtained from the Board's office.