

Philadelphia Board of Ethics

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Ethics Board Calls on Candidates and Donors to Abide by Limits and Issues Advice on “Excess Pre-Candidacy Contributions”

PHILADELPHIA –At its fourth public meeting in its first three weeks of operation, the new Philadelphia Board of Ethics called on all candidates and donors to abide by the City’s campaign contribution limits and urged the City to appeal a recent court ruling on its authority to impose such limits. An appeal by the City would automatically suspend that ruling.

“Contribution limits are an essential part of ethics reform. The Board urges all candidates and donors to continue to follow the limits while conflicting court decisions are reconciled. We commend the Chamber of Commerce for urging its members to continue to comply with the law,” said Richard Glazer, Esquire, Chair of the Ethics Board.

The Board also approved an Advisory Opinion recommending that candidates place in a separate account any contributions they received before they announced their candidacy that are in excess of the legal contribution limits. It advises candidates with these “pre-candidacy excess contributions” to deposit them in a Segregated Pre-Candidacy Excess Contribution Account (“SPEC Account”) and to report on the account as soon as it is established.

The Ethics Board indicated that it may develop regulations that would specify what candidates are to do with any pre-candidacy excess contributions. In the meantime, the Ethics Board recommends that candidates establish SPEC Accounts in order to verify compliance with the contribution limits. The City’s campaign finance law prohibits candidates from spending any excess pre-candidacy contributions to influence the election.

The Board’s Advisory Opinion is in response to a public request for guidance on the rule from a candidate for Mayor. The complete Advisory Opinion 2006-003 is available on the Ethics Board’s web site at: <http://www.phila.gov/ethicsboard/>.

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The five-member, independent Philadelphia Board of Ethics was established by ordinance, approved by voters in May 2006, and installed on November 27, 2006. It is charged with providing ethics training for all city employees and enforcing city campaign finance, financial disclosure, and conflict of interest laws, and has authority to render advice, investigate complaints and issue fines.