

## **Philadelphia's Political Campaign Finance Law: A Plain English Explanation**

Overview: The Philadelphia political campaign finance law applies to elections for the following City offices: Mayor; City Council, District Attorney, Sheriff, City Commissioners, and City Controller.

Contribution limits: During an election year, an individual may make contributions up to the following maximum amounts:

- 1) \$2,600 to the candidate's political committee,
- 2) \$2,600 to a former candidate's political committee in post-candidacy contributions, and
- 3) \$2,600 to a litigation fund committee established by the candidate.

Political committees and certain forms of business organization may contribute in the same manner but with a maximum contribution of \$10,600.

Excess pre-candidacy contributions: If a candidate, prior to declaring his or her candidacy, receives a contribution that exceeds the limits, he or she may not use the excess portion of that contribution to influence his or her election.

Doubling of contribution limits: If a candidate contributes \$250,000 or more of his or her own resources to his or her own campaign, the limits for contributions to the political committee of all candidates for the same office double. The limits do not double for post-candidacy or litigation fund contributions.

Use of political committees by candidates: Except for a litigation fund committee and certain limited expenditures for sample ballot distribution in the candidate's ward, a candidate for City elective office may not use more than one political committee and one checking account to receive contributions or make expenditures to influence his or her election.

Electronic Filing: Candidates and political committees that receive contributions or make expenditures to influence a City election must electronically file campaign finance reports with the Ethics Board.

Penalties: Generally, a violation of the City's campaign finance provisions is subject to a civil penalty of \$1,000. The penalty may be increased to a maximum of \$2,000 based on aggravating factors or reduced to a minimum of \$250 based on mitigating factors. The penalty for accepting an excess contribution is three times the excess portion or \$2,000, whichever is less, but no penalty is assessed if the candidate returns the excess portion within 15 days of receipt and so notifies Ethics Board. The penalty for failure to file a campaign finance report is \$250, but each day after the report was due is a separate violation, with a maximum penalty of \$2,000 for first 30 days plus \$1,000 for each additional 30-day period, or part thereof.

More Information: For more information about the City's campaign finance law, call 215-686-9450 or visit the Ethics Board's web site: <http://www.phila.gov/ethicsboard>.

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This statement is provided to promote familiarity with the law and is not intended to substitute for review of the law itself.

**Ethics Board Regulation No. 1 provides detailed guidance on the City's campaign finance law. It is available on the Ethics Board's web site.**

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