

Philadelphia's Political Campaign Finance Law: A Plain English Explanation¹

Overview: The Philadelphia political campaign finance law applies to candidates for the following City elective offices: Mayor; City Council, District Attorney, Sheriff, City Commissioners, City Controller, Clerk of Quarter Sessions, and Register of Wills.

The City's political campaign finance law has three main features: (1) places limits on political contributions to candidates for City elective offices; (2) requires disclosure by candidates and political committees of campaign finance information to the City's Ethics Board; and (3) authorizes the Ethics Board to enforce and provide guidance on the law.

1. Contribution Limits: Beginning on January 1, 2008, individuals are limited to contributing and candidates are permitted to accept no more than **\$2,600** to any candidate for City elective office in any calendar year. Businesses and political committees may contribute no more than **\$10,600** to any candidate for City elective office in any calendar year. Candidates are also prohibited from spending portions of contributions received prior to becoming a declared candidate that exceed these limits.

In non-election years, candidates for City offices are also subject to certain contribution limits from political committees in the aggregate.

2. Single Committee/Account Rule: Each candidate for City elective office must have only one political committee and only one checking account for the purpose of receiving contributions or making expenditures for that candidacy.

3. Electronic Filing Rule: Candidates and political committees that make contributions to candidates for City offices must electronically file the same campaign finance information with the Ethics Board that they are required to file under the Pennsylvania Election Code.

¹ This statement is provided to promote familiarity with the law and is not intended to substitute for review of the law itself. It also does not provide any information regarding state or federal legal requirements or regarding limitations on eligibility for City contracts based on campaign contributions.

4. Penalties and Remedies: A violation of the City's campaign finance provisions is subject to a civil penalty of \$1,900 for each violation committed during calendar year 2008. The penalty is \$2,000 for a violation committed during calendar year 2009 and thereafter. The Law provides potential non-monetary penalties for certain violations of the disclosure requirements, including the possibility of being forever disqualified from holding an elected or appointed City office, or employment with the City, its agencies, authorities, boards or commissions.

5. Jurisdiction of the Ethics Board: The City's campaign finance provisions are within the jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics. The Ethics Board is authorized to seek fines and penalties for violations of the Law.

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/index.html>.