

# Campaign finance requirements in Pennsylvania

## PUBLICPOLICY in Pennsylvania

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**Pennsylvania campaign finance requirements** govern the following:

- how much money candidates may receive from individuals and organizations,
- how much and how often they must report those contributions, and
- how much individuals, organizations and political parties may contribute to campaigns.

In addition to direct campaign contributions, campaign finance laws also apply to third-party organizations and [nonprofit organizations](#) that seek to influence elections through [independent expenditures](#) or [issue advocacy](#).

As of May 2015, individuals could make unlimited contributions to candidates for office and to ballot measure campaigns. Corporations and unions could not contribute to candidates for office, but these groups could make unlimited contributions to ballot measure campaigns.

## Background



Seal of the United States  
Federal Election Commission

The [Federal Election Commission](#) (FEC) is the independent regulatory agency that administers and enforces federal campaign election laws. The FEC is responsible for disclosing campaign finance information, enforcing limits and prohibitions on contributions and overseeing public funding of presidential elections.<sup>[1]</sup> According to the FEC, an individual becomes a federal candidate and must begin reporting campaign finances once he or she has either raised or spent \$5,000 in his or her campaign. Within fifteen days of this benchmark, the candidate must register with the FEC and designate an official campaign committee, which is responsible for the funds and expenditures of the campaign. This committee must have an official treasurer and cannot support any candidate but the one who registered it. Detailed financial reports are then made to the FEC every financial quarter after the individual is registered. Reports are also made before primaries and before the general election.<sup>[2]</sup>

The rules governing federal election campaigns and contributions have evolved over the past generation as result of a number of Supreme Court decisions. In the 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision, the court held that corporate funding of independent political broadcasts in candidate elections cannot be limited. The court's decision also overturned the ban on for-profit and not-for-profit corporations and unions broadcasting electioneering communications in the 30 days before a presidential primary and in the 60 days before a general election.<sup>[3]</sup> In the *SpeechNOW.org v. Federal Election Commission* decision, the first application of the *Citizens United* decision, the court held that contribution limits on what individuals could give to independent expenditure-only groups, and the amount

### Campaign finance



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these organizations could receive, were unconstitutional. Contribution limits on donations directly to candidates, however, remained unchanged.<sup>[4][5]</sup> In 2014's *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission* decision, the court overturned biennial aggregate campaign contribution limits, and held that individuals may contribute to as many federal candidates as they want, but may only contribute up to the federal limit in each case.<sup>[6]</sup>

While the FEC governs federal election campaigns and contribution limits, individual states enforce their own regulation and reporting requirements. Regulations vary by state, as do limits on campaign contributions and third-party activities to influence elections.

## Contribution limits

The table below details contribution limits as they applied to various types of individuals and groups in Pennsylvania as of May 2015. The uppermost row of the table indicates the contributor, while the leftmost column indicates the recipient.

Pennsylvania contribution limits as of May 2015

|   | Individual | Family    | Political Party | Political Committee | Political Candidate | Political Candidate | Political Candidate |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Statewide Candidate (incl. Governor)</b> | unlimited  | unlimited | unlimited       | unlimited           | \$0                 | \$0                 | \$0                 |
| <b>Senate</b>                               | unlimited  | unlimited | unlimited       | unlimited           | \$0                 | \$0                 | \$0                 |
| <b>House</b>                                | unlimited  | unlimited | unlimited       | unlimited           | \$0                 | \$0                 | \$0                 |
| <b>PAC</b>                                  | unlimited  | unlimited | unlimited       | unlimited           | \$0                 | \$0                 | \$0                 |
| <b>Party committees</b>                     | unlimited  | unlimited | unlimited       | unlimited           | \$0                 | \$0                 | \$0                 |
| <b>Ballot measures</b>                      | unlimited  | unlimited | unlimited       | unlimited           | \$0                 | unlimited           | unlimited           |

Sources: [Pennsylvania Department of State](#), "Campaign Finance Frequently Asked Questions," accessed May 22, 2015 

## Candidate requirements

Candidates must file regular campaign finance reports. A candidate may authorize a committee to accept contributions and make expenditures on his or her behalf, but is not required to do so. A candidate is not required to establish a separate financial account for campaign purposes.<sup>[7]</sup>

If a candidate committee is formed, it must have both a chairperson and treasurer (one person cannot serve both functions). Before a committee can receive contributions on behalf of a candidate, the committee must be authorized to do so in writing by the candidate. This authorization form (provided by the [Pennsylvania Secretary of State](#)) must be received by the appropriate elections official (i.e., the Pennsylvania Secretary of State for candidates for state office, including the [Pennsylvania General Assembly](#)) before the committee receives contributions. Any committee that receives contributions in aggregate of \$250 or more must file a registration statement within 20 days after the date on which the committee receives such amount. Registration statements must include the following information:<sup>[7]</sup>



Seal of Pennsylvania 

1. the name, address and phone number of the committee
2. the name, address and phone number of the committee's treasurer
3. the name, address and phone number of the committee's chairman
4. the name, address and relationship of affiliated or connected organizations
5. the candidate's name and address
6. the banks, safety deposit boxes or other repositories and their addresses used by the committee
7. the proposed period of committee operation

If the amount of contributions, expenditures or liabilities exceeds \$250 in a reporting period, the candidate or committee must file reports. If not, the candidate or treasurer of the committee must file a statement to that effect in lieu of a report.<sup>[7]</sup>

On forms prescribed by the Pennsylvania Secretary of State, candidates or committees must include the following in each report:<sup>[7]</sup>

1. the full name, address, and occupation and name of employer for each person who has made one or more contributions to the candidate or committee within the reporting period in an aggregate amount or value greater than \$250; the report must also note the amount and date of such contributions
2. the full name and mailing address of each person who has made one or more contributions to the candidate or committee within the reporting period in an aggregate amount or value greater than \$50; the report must also note the amount and date of such contributions
3. the total sum of individual contributions made to the candidate or committee during the reporting period and not otherwise reported
4. each expenditure, the date made, the full name and address of the recipient, and the purpose of the expenditure
5. any unpaid debts or liabilities, including the nature and amount of each, date incurred, and full name and address of the person owed
6. any unexpended balance of contributions or other receipts appearing since the last report filed

Candidates who do form committees are required to file separate reports from those of their campaign committees. All candidates and their authorized committees who are required to file reports with the Pennsylvania Secretary of State must also file copies of those reports with the counties in which they reside.<sup>[7]</sup>

Generally speaking, the following campaign finance reports must be filed: a 6th Tuesday Pre-Primary Report, a 2nd Friday Pre-Primary Report, a 30-Day Post-Primary Report, a 6th Tuesday Pre-Election Report, a 2nd Friday Pre-Election Report, a 30-Day Post-Election and an Annual Report.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Campaign finance legislation

The following is a list of recent campaign finance bills that have been introduced in or passed by the [Pennsylvania state legislature](#). To learn more about each of these bills, click the bill title. This information is provided by [BillTrack50](#) and [LegiScan](#).

*Note: Due to the nature of the sorting process used to generate this list, some results may not be relevant to the topic. If no bills are displayed below, no legislation pertaining to this topic has been introduced in the legislature recently.*

### Campaign finance in Pennsylvania

#### **PA SR1 - Adopting Ethical Conduct Rules of the Senate.**

A Resolution adopting Ethical Conduct Rules of the Senate.

1/1/2019: *Introduced and adopted*

#### **PA SB1005 - Making extensive revisions relating to preliminary provisions; ...**

An Act amending the act of August 9, 1955 (P.L.323, No.130), known as The County Code, making extensive revisions relating to preliminary provisions; names and corporate powers, classification of counties; fixing and relocating lines and boundaries; county...

10/24/2018: *Act No. 154*

#### **PA HB1332 - In Secretary of the Commonwealth, further providing for powers ...**

An Act amending the act of June 3, 1937 (P.L.1333, No.320), known as the Pennsylvania Election Code, in Secretary of the Commonwealth, further providing for powers and duties of the Secretary of the Commonwealth; in primary and election expenses, further...

5/2/2017: *Referred to STATE GOVERNMENT*

#### **PA HB1272 - In primary and election expenses, further providing for definit...**

An Act amending the act of June 3, 1937 (P.L.1333, No.320), known as the Pennsylvania Election Code, in primary and election expenses, further providing for definitions, for reporting by candidate and political committees and other persons and for late

## Election and campaign ballot measures

See also: [Elections and campaigns on the ballot](#) and [List of Pennsylvania ballot measures](#)

## Election-related agencies

See also: [Campaign finance agencies in Pennsylvania](#) and [State election agencies](#)

Candidates running for office may require some form of interaction with the following agencies:


**Pennsylvania Secretary of State; Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation**

*Why: This agency oversees candidate filing processes.*  
210 N. Office Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0060  
Phone: [717.787.5280](tel:717.787.5280)  
Website: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/>   
Email: [RA-elections@state.pa.us](mailto:RA-elections@state.pa.us)

## Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission


*Why: This agency processes Statement of Financial Interests forms.*

### Physical and mailing address

PO Box 11470  
Room 309, Finance Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1470  
Phone: [\(717\) 783-1610](tel:(717)783-1610)  
Website: <http://www.ethics.state.pa.us/> 

## Counties

See also: [Counties in Pennsylvania](#)

A candidate must file a number of documents with the county elections office in his or her home county. Individual county contact information can be found below. To provide a link or information for the table below, please [email us](#) .

Pennsylvania county contact information

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## Recent news




The link below is to the most recent stories in a Google news search for the terms **Pennsylvania campaign finance**. These results are automatically generated from Google. Ballotpedia does not curate or endorse these articles.

[Campaign finance requirements in Pennsylvania - Google News](#) 

## See also

- [Campaign finance regulation](#)
- [Ballot access requirements for political candidates in Pennsylvania](#)
- [Pennsylvania](#)

## Footnotes

- [↑](#) *Federal Election Commission*, "About the FEC," accessed June 27, 2012 
- [↑](#) *Federal Election Commission*, "Candidate Registration Brochure," accessed December 7, 2012 
- [↑](#) *New York Times*, "Justices, 5-4, Reject Corporate Spending Limit," January 21, 2010 
- [↑](#) *Federal Election Commission*, "Speechnow.org v. FEC," April 7, 2014 
- [↑](#) *OpenSecrets*, "Two Federal Court Rulings Could Change Campaign Finance Landscape," March 26, 2010 
- [↑](#) *Federal Election Commission*, "Ongoing Litigation," accessed March 18, 2015 
- [↑](#) <sup>7.0</sup> <sup>7.1</sup> <sup>7.2</sup> <sup>7.3</sup> <sup>7.4</sup> *Pennsylvania Department of State*, ["Pennsylvania Department of State"](#) 

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