

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

The following are excerpts from the “Campaign Finance Overview – Local Candidates” manual, which cover the topics that are more frequently asked by candidates. The complete manual is available upon request or can be found on the Government Accountability Board website at <http://gab.wi.gov/publications/manuals>.

ELIGIBILITY FOR EXEMPTION

Committees may be eligible for exemption from filing campaign finance reports if campaign finance activity is low enough to meet certain criteria. These criteria are:

- The committee anticipates that it will not accept contributions, make disbursements, or incur loans and other obligations in an aggregate amount exceeding \$1,000 in a calendar year,
- The committee anticipates that it will not accept any contribution or cumulative contributions from a single source exceeding \$100.00 in a calendar year;
- The candidate or treasurer signs and dates the request for exemption on the Campaign Registration Statement.

The \$100.00 limit on contributions from a single source does not apply to contributions from a candidate’s personal funds for his or her own campaign if the candidate’s contributions total \$1,000.00 or less in a calendar year.

FINANCIAL RECORDS DURING EXEMPTION

When a committee is exempt, it is not required to file any campaign finance reports. However, the candidate or treasurer is required to keep financial records adequate to meet the requirements of campaign finance law. This means that a record must be kept of all contributions to the committee and of all the expenditures.

A candidate who is exempt from filing campaign finance reports may use a personal account as the campaign depository. A separate campaign depository account is not required.

REVOKING EXEMPTION

If a decision is made at a later date to exceed the \$1,000.00 limit on contributions and disbursements or to raise more than \$100.00 from a single source for the campaign during a calendar year, the committee must amend its campaign registration statement immediately.

The committee is required to file a campaign finance report beginning with the next regular report. The first report must cover all financial activity from the time of registration or from the date of the last financial report before going on exemption. The committee cannot accept a contribution from a single source that exceeds \$250.00.

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

An in-kind contribution is any goods, service or property offered to the campaign committee free or at less than the usual cost. For example, if a campaign worker purchases stamps that are used for a mailing and is not reimbursed for the cost of the stamps, the value of the stamps is an in-kind contribution to the campaign committee from that campaign worker. When an individual is paid to work on behalf of a candidate by a political committee or some other individual, the payment for those services is an in-kind contribution to the campaign committee. Consultant services are often provided to a campaign committee in this manner. If a political committee or individual offers to provide food and beverages for a fund-raiser at less than ordinary market price, the difference between the ordinary market price and the cost to the campaign is an in-kind contribution from the political committee or individual.

PROHIBITED CONTRIBUTIONS

Certain contributions are prohibited by Wisconsin law. A committee may not accept the following types of contributions:

- Anonymous contributions of more than \$10.00;
- Contributions in cash of more than \$50.00
- Contributions given in the name of someone other than the contributor (these are laundered contributions);
- Contributions from cooperatives or corporations;
- Contributions in excess of limits set by law.