



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF CAMPAIGN & POLITICAL FINANCE

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To: Local election officials
From: Michael Sullivan, Director *MJS*
Subject: Changes to the campaign finance law

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As you know, Gov. Patrick signed a bill Aug. 1 that makes dozens of changes to the campaign finance law, but only a few of the changes affect local election officials.

The primary purpose of the legislation was to require more disclosure by Independent Expenditure "Super" PACs, political committees that can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money to support or oppose candidates, so long as they don't coordinate with candidates and their committees.

Super PACs can organize and file reports on the local level, if they are created to support or oppose candidates who file locally. We don't anticipate a glut of Super PACs to organize on the local level. However, if a Super PAC decides to organize in your community, please call OCPF to discuss reporting requirements.

If a Super PAC is organized to support or oppose candidates who file with OCPF, such as mayoral or city council candidates in Quincy, for example, the committee organizes and files with OCPF.

Several other changes to the law directly or indirectly affect local election officials, committees and candidates. The changes are:

- The annual individual contribution limit to candidates increases from \$500 per calendar year to \$1,000 for all offices. The new limit takes effect Jan. 1, 2015.
- Public employees who are appointed and compensated are prohibited from being treasurers of political committees. Non-compensated appointees are not public employees under the campaign finance law and can be treasurers of political committees. Elected officials, even if they are compensated, can be treasurers, except they cannot be treasurers for their own campaigns or for political action committees.
- Candidates and committees can now split contributions made on a joint checking account. For example, if a candidate receives a check for \$1,000 from a joint account, and the names of both individuals are pre-printed on the front of the check, the candidate can decide to split the check, attributing \$500 to one person and \$500 to the other. The contribution must be itemized on campaign finance reports on two separate lines.
- Candidates can accept up to \$100 in money order contributions per year per individual, an increase of \$50. This change starts in January. Cash contributions are still limited to \$50 for the calendar year.

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- Municipal candidates and committees, including municipal ballot question committees, are now required to file subvendor reports. These reports are filed by candidates or committees to disclose how their vendors spend money on behalf of the campaign, subject to the following thresholds – the committee pays the vendor \$5,000 or more in a calendar year, and the vendor subsequently makes payments to subvendors of \$500 or more. This change is immediately in effect.
- The director of OCPF must make a summary of the law and forms *available* to town clerks for distribution of the materials to candidates. This section was changed to implement our recommendation that clerks collect e-mail addresses for all local candidates and forward a summary of the law and the forms electronically. This change is in effect now.
- Mayoral candidates in cities with populations of less than 40,000 will report with OCPF (all other mayoral candidates already reported with OCPF). OCPF will contact all local election officials in these cities early next year to organize the candidates with our agency.
- City council and alderman candidates in cities with population of 75,000 to 100,000 will report with OCPF in the depository system. Mayoral candidates in those cities, who already file with OCPF in the non-depository system, will transition into the depository system.

A full summary of the campaign finance law changes can be found on the front page of the OCPF website, www.ocpf.us. Also enclosed is a special edition of our newsletter, which discusses the campaign finance law changes.