



Preliminary Report of the Audit Division on Biden for President, Inc.

December 15, 2006 – April 30, 2008

Why the Audit Was Done

Federal law requires the Commission to audit every political committee established by a candidate who receives public funds for the primary campaign.¹ The audit determines whether the candidate was entitled to all of the matching funds received, whether the campaign used the matching funds in accordance with the law, whether the candidate is entitled to additional matching funds, and whether the campaign otherwise complied with the limitations, prohibitions, and disclosure requirements of the election law.

Future Action

The Commission may initiate an enforcement action, at a later time, with respect to any of the matters discussed in this report.

About the Committee (p. 2)

Biden for President, Inc. is the principal campaign committee of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., a candidate for the Democratic Party's nomination for the office of President of the United States. The Committee is headquartered in Wilmington, DE. For more information, see chart on the Campaign Organization, p. 2.

Financial Activity (p. 3)

• Receipts	
○ Contributions from Individuals	\$ 8,210,947
○ Contributions from Political Committees	166,045
○ Transfers from Affiliated Committees	1,900,000
○ Loans Received	1,468,614
○ Matching Funds Received	857,189
○ Offsets to Operating Expenditures	270,611
○ Other Receipts	12,650
○ Total Receipts	\$ 12,886,056
• Disbursements	
○ Operating Expenditures	\$ 10,656,525
○ Loan Repayments	857,189
○ Transfers to Other Authorized Committees	639,408
○ Contribution Refunds	578,032
○ Total Disbursements	\$ 12,731,154

Findings and Recommendations (p. 4)

- Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations (Finding 1)
- Receipt of Contributions that Exceed Limits (Finding 2)
- Prohibited In-Kind Contribution (Finding 3)
- Stale-Dated Checks (Finding 4)
- Disclosure of Disbursements (Finding 5)
- Reporting of Debts and Obligations (Finding 6)

¹ 26 U.S.C. §9038(a).

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Part I

Background

Authority for Audit

This report is based on an audit of Biden for President, Inc. (BFP), undertaken by the Audit Division of the Federal Election Commission (the Commission) as mandated by Section 9038(a) of Title 26 of the United States Code. That section states "After each matching payment period, the Commission shall conduct a thorough examination and audit of the qualified campaign expenses of every candidate and his authorized committees who received [matching] payments under section 9037." Also, Section 9039(b) of the United States Code and Section 9038.1(a)(2) of the Commission's Regulations state that the Commission may conduct other examinations and audits from time to time as it deems necessary.

Scope of Audit

This audit examined:

1. The receipt of excessive contributions and loans.
2. The receipt of contributions from prohibited sources.
3. The receipt of transfers from other authorized committees.
4. The disclosure of contributions and transfers received.
5. The disclosure of disbursements, debts and obligations.
6. The recordkeeping process and completeness of records.
7. The consistency between reported figures and bank records.
8. The accuracy of the Statement of Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations.
9. The campaign's compliance with spending limitations.
10. Other campaign operations necessary to the review.

Inventory of Campaign Records

The Audit staff routinely conducts an inventory of campaign records before it begins the audit fieldwork. BFP records were materially complete and the fieldwork began immediately.

Changes to the Law

On September 14, 2007, the President signed into law the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007 (HLOGA), which included many revisions to the ethics rules that govern the conduct of U.S. Senators and members of the House of Representatives. One of the effects of HLOGA was to establish new rules governing presidential non-commercial travel after September 14, 2007. Section 439(a)(c) of Title 2 of the United States Code was amended to prohibit Senate and Presidential candidates, and their authorized committees, from spending campaign funds for travel on non-commercial aircraft, unless they pay their pro-rata share of the charter rate. The Commission intends to amend its current regulations to implement the new law. However, in a press release dated September 24, 2007, the Commission Chairman indicated that "until regulations are issued, the Commission would not pursue a political committee if it operates under a reasonable interpretation of the statute, even if our subsequent regulations reach a different interpretation." Since the travel noted in Finding 3, Prohibited In-Kind Contribution, occurred before September 14, 2007, the new travel rules were not applicable.

Part II

Overview of Campaign

Campaign Organization

Important Dates	Biden for President, Inc.
• Date of Registration	January 31, 2007
• Eligibility Period ²	December 3, 2007 – January 3, 2008
• Audit Coverage	December 15, 2006 – April 30, 2008 ³
Headquarters	Wilmington, DE
Bank Information	
• Bank Depositories	One
• Bank Accounts	Three checking, one certificate of deposit
Treasurer	
• Treasurer When Audit Was Conducted	Melvyn Monzak
• Treasurer During Period Covered by Audit	Melvyn Monzak
Management Information	
• Attended FEC Campaign Finance Seminar	No
• Used Commonly Available Campaign Management Software Package	Yes
• Who Handled Accounting, Recordkeeping Tasks and Other Day-to-Day Operations	Paid staff

² The period during which the candidate was eligible for matching funds, began on the date of certification of his matching fund eligibility and ended on the date the candidate announced his withdrawal from the campaign. See 11 CFR §9033.

³ Limited reviews of receipts and expenditures were performed after April 30, 2008, to determine whether the candidate was eligible to receive additional matching funds.

Overview of Financial Activity (Audited Amounts)

Cash on hand @ December 15, 2006	\$ 0
o Contributions from Individuals	\$ 8,210,947 ⁴
o Contributions from Political Committees	166,045
o Transfers from Affiliated Committees	1,900,000
o Loans Received	1,468,614
o Matching Funds Received	857,189 ⁵
o Offsets to Operating Expenditures	270,611
o Other Receipts	12,650
Total Receipts	\$ 12,886,056
o Operating Expenditures	\$ 10,656,525
o Loan Repayments	857,189
o Transfers to Other Authorized Committees	639,408
o Contribution Refunds	578,032
Total Disbursements	\$ 12,731,154
Cash on hand @ April 30, 2008	\$ 154,902

⁴ Approximately 33,000 contributions from more than 20,000 individuals.

⁵ As of April 30, 2008, BFP had made 5 matching fund submissions totaling \$2,016,725 of which \$1,992,225 was certified by the Commission. However, BFP only received \$857,189. As of November 1, 2008, BFP had submitted 8 requests totaling \$2,061,282 of which \$2,025,597 was certified representing 9% of the maximum entitlement (\$21,025,000).

Part III

Summaries

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1. Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations

The Audit staff's review of BFP's financial activity through December 31, 2008 and estimated winding down costs indicated that the candidate did not receive matching fund payments in excess of his entitlement. (For more detail, see p. 6)

Finding 2. Receipt of Contributions that Exceed Limits

The Audit staff's review of contributions from individuals indicated that BFP failed to resolve a material number of excessive contributions. Based on a sample of contributions, the projected dollar value of the unresolved excessive contributions in the population is \$106,216. In addition, the projected amount of excessive contributions that were not resolved in a timely manner is \$1,092,899. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide evidence that the contributions are either not excessive or were resolved in a timely manner. Absent such a demonstration, BFP should make appropriate refunds to contributors or make a payment of \$106,216 (or a lesser amount based on BFP's response) to the U.S. Treasury. (For more detail, see p. 9)

Finding 3. Prohibited In-Kind Contribution

The review of campaign travel identified one flight by BFP on private aircraft that was reimbursed using the lowest unrestricted and non-discounted first-class commercial airfare. However, the plane utilized was certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and operated in a manner that requires its use be paid at a charter rate. The difference between what BFP paid and the charter rate resulted in the receipt of an in-kind contribution of \$26,889 from a corporation. The Audit staff recommends that BFP demonstrate that it did not receive a prohibited in-kind contribution or make a payment to the U.S. Treasury. (For more detail, see p. 14)

Finding 4. Stale-Dated Checks

The Audit staff identified stale-dated checks totaling \$137,757 issued by BFP. Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP made a payment to the U.S. Treasury for stale-dated checks in the amount of \$8,457 resulting in an unresolved balance of \$129,300. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide evidence that the remaining checks are not outstanding or make a payment to the U.S. Treasury in the amount of the outstanding checks. (For more detail, see p. 16)

Finding 5. Disclosure of Disbursements

The Audit staff identified 49 disbursements, totaling \$3,779,976, that were not adequately disclosed. Problems noted included incorrect or inadequate purpose as well as incorrect addresses. Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP filed amended reports that

materially corrected the disclosure of these disbursements. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide any additional comments it feels relevant to this matter. (For more detail, see p. 17)

Finding 6. Reporting of Debts and Obligations

The Audit staff identified debt totaling \$870,296 that was not disclosed on Schedules D (Debts and Obligations) as required. Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP filed amended reports that materially corrected the disclosure of these debts. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide any additional comments it feels relevant to this matter. (For more detail, see p. 18)

Summary of Amounts Potentially Owed to the U.S. Treasury

• Finding 2	Receipt of Contributions that Exceed Limits	\$ 106,216
• Finding 3	Prohibited In-Kind Contribution	26,889
• Finding 4	Stale-Dated Checks	129,300
	Total Due U.S. Treasury	\$ 262,405

Part IV

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1. Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations

Summary

The Audit staff's review of BFP's financial activity through December 31, 2008 and estimated winding down costs indicated that the candidate did not receive matching fund payments in excess of his entitlement.

Legal Standard

A. Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations (NOCO). Within 15 days after the candidate's date of ineligibility (see definition below), the candidate must submit a statement of "net outstanding campaign obligations." This statement must contain, among other things:

- The total of all committee assets including cash on hand, amounts owed to the committee and capital assets listed at their fair market value;
- The total of all outstanding obligations for qualified campaign expenses; and
- An estimate of necessary winding-down costs. 11 CFR §9034.5(a).

B. Date of Ineligibility. The date of ineligibility is whichever of the following dates occurs first:

- The day on which the candidate ceases to be active in more than one state;
- The 30th day following the second consecutive primary in which the candidate receives less than 10 percent of the popular vote;
- The end of the matching payment period, which is generally the day when the party nominates its candidate for the general election; or
- In the case of a candidate whose party does not make its selection at a national convention, the last day of the last national convention held by a major party in the calendar year. 11 CFR §§9032.6 and 9033.5.

C. Qualified Campaign Expense. Each of the following expenses is a qualified campaign expense.

- An expense that is:
 - Incurred by or on behalf of the candidate (or his or her campaign) during the period beginning on the day the individual becomes a candidate and continuing through the last day of the candidate's eligibility under 11 CFR §9033.5;
 - Made in connection with the candidate's campaign for nomination; and
 - Not incurred or paid in violation of any federal law or the law of the state where the expense was incurred or paid. 11 CFR §9032.9.
- An expense incurred for the purpose of determining whether an individual should become a candidate, if that individual subsequently becomes a candidate, regardless of when that expense is paid. 11 CFR §9034.4.

- An expense associated with winding down the campaign and terminating political activity. 11 CFR §9034.4(a)(3).

D. Value of Capital Assets. The fair market value of capital assets is 60% of the total original cost of the assets when acquired, except that assets that are received after the date of ineligibility must be valued at their fair market value on the date received. A candidate may claim a lower fair market value for a capital asset by listing the asset on the NOCO statement separately and demonstrating, through documentation, the lower fair market value. 11 CFR §9034.5(c)(1).

E. Entitlement to Matching Payments after Date of Ineligibility. If, on the date of ineligibility (see above), a candidate has net outstanding campaign obligations as defined under 11 CFR §9034.5, that candidate may continue to receive matching payments provided that he or she still has net outstanding campaign debts on the day when the matching payments are made. 11 CFR §9034.1(b).

Facts and Analysis

The Candidate's date of ineligibility (DOI) was January 3, 2008. The Audit staff reviewed BFP's financial activity through December 31, 2008, analyzed estimated winding down costs and prepared the Statement of Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations that appears on the next page:

Biden for President, Inc.
Statement of Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations
As of January 3, 2008
Prepared December 31, 2008

Assets

Cash in Bank	\$ 1,617,833	[a]
Accounts Receivable	173,184	
Capital Assets	<u>38,774</u>	
Total Assets		\$1,829,791

Liabilities

Accounts Payable for Qualified Campaign Expenses at 1/3/08		\$ 2,067,605	
Winding Down Costs:			
Paid 1/4/08 – 12/31/08	\$ 817,304		
Estimated Winding Down Costs (1/1/09 - 12/31/09)	<u>45,500</u>	862,804	[b]
Loan Payable at 1/3/08		1,132,114	
Amounts Payable to U.S. Treasury for:			
Unresolved Excessive Contributions (See Finding 2)	\$106,216		
Prohibited In-Kind Contribution (See Finding 3)	26,889		
Stale-Dated Checks (See Finding 4)	<u>129,300</u>	<u>262,405</u>	
Total Liabilities			<u>4,324,928</u>
Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations (Deficit) as of January 3, 2008			(\$2,495,137)

[a] Adjusted for stale-dated checks totaling \$8,457 issued prior to DOI.

[b] The Audit staff will review BFP's disclosure reports to compare actual figures with the estimates and prepare adjustments accordingly.

Shown below are adjustments for funds received after January 3, 2008, through December 31, 2008, based on the most current financial information available at the close of fieldwork:

Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations (Deficit) as of 1/3/08	(\$2,495,137)
Private Contributions and Other Receipts Received 1/4/08 through 12/31/08	358,680
Matching Funds Received 1/4/08 through 12/31/08	2,031,197
Remaining Net Outstanding Campaign Obligations (Deficit) as of 12/31/08	(\$105,260) ⁶

As presented above, BFP has not received matching fund payments in excess of its entitlement. However, the Audit staff will reevaluate whether any repayment is due based on BFP's response to this report.

Preliminary Audit Report Recommendation

The Audit staff recommends that, within 60 calendar days of service of this report, BFP demonstrate an adjustment(s) is required to any component of the NOCO statement or provide any other comments it so desires.

Finding 2. Receipt of Contributions that Exceed Limits

Summary

The Audit staff's review of contributions from individuals indicated that BFP failed to resolve a material number of excessive contributions. Based on a sample of contributions, the projected dollar value of the unresolved excessive contributions in the population is \$106,216. In addition, the projected amount of excessive contributions that were not resolved in a timely manner is \$1,092,899. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide evidence that the contributions are either not excessive or were resolved in a timely manner. Absent such a demonstration, BFP should make appropriate refunds to contributors or make a payment of \$106,216 (or a lesser amount based on BFP's response) to the U.S. Treasury.

Legal Standard

A. Authorized Committee Limits. An authorized committee may not receive more than a total of \$2,300 per election from any one person. 2 U.S.C. §441a(a)(1)(A), and (f); 11 CFR §§110.1(a) and (b) and 110.9(a).

B. Handling Contributions That Appear Excessive. If a committee receives a contribution that appears to be excessive, the committee must either:

- return the questionable contribution to the donor; or

⁶ Subsequent to date of ineligibility, BFP incurred and repaid a \$161,500 loan. This has no effect on the analysis and is not included in the above figures.

- deposit the contribution into its federal account and keep enough money on account to cover all potential refunds until the legality of the contribution is established. 11 CFR §103.3(b)(3) and (4).

The excessive portion may also be redesignated to another election or reattributed to another contributor as explained below.

C. Redesignation of Excessive Contributions. The committee may ask the contributor to redesignate the excess portion of the contribution for use in another election.

- The committee must, within 60 days of receipt of the contribution, obtain and retain a signed redesignation letter which informs the contributor that a refund of the excessive portion may be requested; or
- refund the excessive amount. 11 CFR §§110.1(b)(5), 110.1(l)(2) and 103.3(b)(3).

Notwithstanding the above, when an authorized political committee receives an excessive contribution from an individual or a non-multi-candidate committee, the committee may presumptively redesignate the excessive portion to the general election if the contribution:

- Is made before that candidate's primary election;
- Is not designated in writing for a particular election;
- Would be excessive if treated as a primary election contribution; and
- As redesignated, does not cause the contributor to exceed any other contribution limit.

Also, the committee may presumptively redesignate the excessive portion of a general election contribution back to the primary election if the amount redesignated does not exceed the committee's primary net debt position.

The committee is required to notify the contributor in writing of the redesignation within 60 days of the treasurer's receipt of the contribution and must offer the contributor the option to receive a refund instead. For this action to be valid, the committee must retain copies of the notices sent. Presumptive redesignations apply only within the same election cycle between the committee's primary and general elections. 11 CFR §110.1(b)(5)(ii)(B) & (C) and (l)(4)(ii).

D. Reattribution of Excessive Contributions. When an authorized committee receives an excessive contribution, the committee may ask the contributor if the contribution was intended to be a joint contribution from more than one person.

- The committee must, within 60 days of receipt of the contribution, obtain and retain a reattribution letter signed by all contributors; or
- refund the excessive contribution. 11 CFR §§110.1(k)(3), 110.1(l)(3) and 103.3(b)(3).

Notwithstanding the above, any excessive contribution that was made on a written instrument that is imprinted with the names of more than one individual may be attributed among the individuals listed unless instructed otherwise by the contributor(s). The committee must inform each contributor:

- how the contribution was attributed; and

- the contributor may instead request a refund of the excessive amount. 11 CFR §110.1(k)(3)(ii)(B).

For this action to be valid, the committee must retain copies of the notices sent. 11 CFR §110.1(l)(4)(ii).

E. General Election Contributions. If a candidate is not a candidate in the general election, any contributions made for the general election shall be refunded to the contributors, redesignated in accordance with 11 CFR §§110.1(b)(5) or 110.2(b)(5), or reattributed in accordance with 11 CFR §110.1(k)(3), as appropriate. 11 CFR §102.9(e)(3).

F. Sampling. In conducting an audit of contributions, the Commission uses generally accepted statistical sampling techniques to quantify the dollar value of related audit findings. Apparent violations (sample errors) identified in a sample are used to project the total amount of violations. If a committee demonstrates that any apparent sample errors are not errors, the Commission will make a new projection based on the reduced number of errors in the sample. Within 30 days of service of the final audit report, the committee must submit a check to the United States Treasury for the total amount of any excessive contributions not refunded, reattributed, or redesignated in a timely manner; or take any action required by the Commission with respect to sample-based findings. 11 CFR § 9038.1(f).

Facts and Analysis

The Audit staff's sample review of contributions from individuals indicated that BFP received a significant number of excessive contributions that either were unresolved or were not resolved in a timely manner. The projected dollar value of the unresolved excessive contributions in the sample population was \$106,016⁷. An additional error of \$200 was identified as the result of a separate review of contributions not included as part of the sample population. Sample errors included:

- Check – Attribution Issue – The errors were for contributions from single account holder checks. Such contributions cannot be presumptively reattributed to another individual.
- Other Credit Card – Attribution Issue - The documentation provided in support of these contributions included credit card authorizations and, if available, solicitation response devices. The excessive portion of the contribution was reattributed to another individual without obtaining the signature of the second individual acknowledging both the contribution and joint liability for the credit card used to make the contribution.
- Other Credit Card – Designation Issue - The documentation provided in support of this contribution included a credit card authorization and a solicitation response device. The response device was not adequate to constitute a designation of the

⁷ A Monetary Unit Sample was used with a 95% confidence level. The estimate is subject to a sampling error of \$91,693 for unresolved excessive contributions. For untirecely resolved excessive contributions the estimate is subject to a sampling error of \$348,491.

contribution to the general election and the excessive contribution was not refunded.

- **Online Credit Card – Designation Issue** - Some of the contributions were received through BFP's Internet website. The website did not provide sufficient notice to the contributor to constitute an attribution of a portion of the contribution to another person or to designate a portion of the contribution to the general election.

The Audit staff also identified excessive contributions that were resolved but not in a timely manner, totaling \$1,092,899. The projected dollar value of such excessive contributions in the sample population was \$1,055,399. Additional errors totaling \$37,500 were identified as the result of a separate review of contributions not included as part of the sample population. All of these excessive contributions were presumptively designated for the general election; however, BFP did not provide copies of letters sent to contributors as notification for the election designation. However, BFP did provide the Audit staff with letters obtaining redesignations of these general-designated contributions to the Candidate's Senate campaign committee, Citizens for Biden (CFB). The letters were all signed by the contributors and mailed after the Candidate's date of ineligibility (1-3-08), well after the receipt of these contributions. Although these letters were not presumptive redesignations as specified in the Commission's regulations, the Audit staff considered these letters to be an adequate, though untimely, substitute to support the "general election" designation of these contributions for BFP.

This conclusion is consistent with the notice provision of presumptive redesignations. A presumptive redesignation does not require a written authorization from the contributor. Rather, BFP may send a notice to the contributor of the redesignation and inform the contributor of his or her option to request that the contribution be refunded. The Audit staff concluded that the signed forms authorizing the redesignation of Presidential contributions to the Senate election(s) also serve to put the contributor on notice that BFP had presumed that the portion of the otherwise excessive Presidential primary election contribution was redesignated to the Presidential general election. The contributions to the Presidential primary election, however, were excessive until the Presidential general to Senate redesignation forms were sent. Given that these redesignation forms, serving as the functional equivalent of the presumptive redesignation notices, were sent much later than 60 days after the excessive Presidential primary contributions, they are untimely as to the redesignations from the Presidential primary to the Presidential general election.

At the exit conference, the Audit staff provided BFP representatives with schedules of all the errors for both the unresolved excessive contributions and the untimely resolved excessive contributions. A discussion ensued regarding the adequacy of letters used to support redesignations of contributions to the general election.

On September 26, 2008, BFP submitted its response to the matters presented at the exit conference. The response acknowledged that the untimely redesignation issue arises from BFP's inability to provide presumptive redesignation letters. Although confident that such letters were timely sent, BFP staff was unable to locate the letters or evidence that they were sent and believe they were inadvertently lost when its location changed in

the spring of 2008. BFP further explained the letter would have been prepared using a template on a BFP computer that was subsequently "wiped clean" and sold when its assets were liquidated following the Candidate's withdrawal from the presidential campaign.

BFP offered the following circumstantial evidence to support that the letters had in fact been sent:

- BFP submitted a complete library of "cure" letters, whether for excessive contributions or missing contributor information. In addition, its Contribution Review Procedures make reference to presumptive redesignation and/or reattribution letters and templates for obtaining redesignations and reattributions are provided. BFP files contained other compliance letters sent for problematic contributions and those requesting additional information. BFP noted that it is unlikely that it would send this array of compliance letters and omit presumptive redesignation and/or reattribution letters.
- The individual primarily responsible for sending the compliance letters, including letters to resolve excessive contributions, had specific recollection that presumptive redesignation and/or reattribution letters had been sent. However, this individual is recently deceased; and, therefore, BFP was unable to obtain a signed affidavit. BFP staff confirmed her recollections, and that she was meticulous and conscientious in performing her duties.
- BFP has been contacting recipients of presumptive redesignation and/or reattribution letters and although some do recollect receiving such a letter, none have been able to furnish a copy. Should any be located, copies will be forwarded to the Audit staff. To date, no such copies have been provided to the Audit staff.
- Finally, BFP concurred with the Audit staff's position that those letters sent to redesignate contributions to Citizens for Biren serve to demonstrate that BFP did not fail to resolve a material number of excessive contributions. According to BFP, these letters reflected an understanding by the contributor and BFP that the excessive portion had been properly resolved and expressed the donative intent of the contributor.

The Audit staff doesn't believe that BFP's response was sufficient to document that presumptive redesignation and/or reattribution letters had been sent.

Preliminary Audit Report Recommendation

The Audit staff recommends that, within 60 calendar days of service of this report, BFP provide:

- Documentation demonstrating that the unresolved excessive contributions (\$106,216) were not excessive. Such documentation should include copies of timely negotiated refund checks or timely signed and dated reattribution/redesignation letters. Absent such documentation, BFP should make appropriate refunds to contributors or make a payment of \$106,216 to the U.S. Treasury and provide evidence of such action (copies of the front and back of negotiated refund checks). Should documentation be presented that demonstrates any sample exceptions are not excessive contributions, the Audit staff will

calculate a revised amount payable to the U.S. Treasury. This revised amount or the unrefunded portion thereof, is payable within 30 calendar days of service of the final audit report; and

- Documentation demonstrating that excessive contributions (\$1,092,899) were timely reattributed and/or redesignated. Such documentation should include evidence that timely presumptive reattribution or redesignation letters were sent; copies of timely signed and dated reattribution/redesignation letters; or, any other documentation which indicates a timely reattribution and/or redesignation were obtained. BFP should provide any other comments it feels are relevant to this issue.

Finding 3. Prohibited In-Kind Contribution

Summary

The review of campaign travel identified one flight by BFP on private aircraft that was reimbursed using the lowest unrestricted and non-discounted first-class commercial airfare. However, the plane utilized was certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and operated in a manner that requires its use be paid at a charter rate. The difference between what BFP paid and the charter rate resulted in the receipt of an in-kind contribution of \$26,889 from a corporation. The Audit staff recommends that BFP demonstrate that it did not receive a prohibited in-kind contribution or make a payment to the U.S. Treasury.

Legal Standard

A. Corporate Contributions Impermissible. A corporation is prohibited from making any contribution in connection with a federal election. 2 U.S.C. §441b(a).

B. Travel by airplane. Campaign use of an airplane licensed to operate for hire by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) under 14 CFR part 121, 129, or 135 are governed by the definition of a contribution at 11 CFR §100.52(a) and (d). 11 CFR §100.93(a)(2).

C. Contribution defined. A gift, subscription, loan (except when made in accordance with 11 CFR §§100.72 and 100.73), advance, or deposit of money or anything of value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office is a contribution. The term anything of value includes all in-kind contributions.

The usual and normal charge for a service is the commercially reasonable rate that one would expect to pay at the time the services were rendered.

The provision of services at a charge less than the usual and normal charge results in an in-kind contribution. The value of such a contribution would be the difference between the usual and normal charge for the services and the amount the political committee was billed and paid. 11 CFR §100.52(a) and (d).

D. Contributions by a Limited Liability Company (LLC). An LLC not electing treatment as corporation under federal tax law or having publicly-traded shares may make

contributions to influence federal elections. Such a contribution will be considered as having been made from a partnership and governed by the rules pertaining to partnerships and subject to a single election limit per candidate of \$2,300. 11 CFR §110.1(b)(1) and (g)(2) and (4).

Facts and Analysis

BFP reimbursed GEH Air Transportation, LLC (GEH) \$7,911 for first-class airfare for three people who made a roundtrip flight between New Hampshire and Iowa in June 2007. This roundtrip flight was flown on a plane which was certified for commercial service by the FAA under 14 CFR part 135 and documentation provided by BFP indicated the flight took place under this part; and thus, it was not eligible for this manner of payment.

Payment for this flight should have been made at a charter rate which reflected the usual and normal charges for services. Based on the charter rate and flight time noted on BFP's internal documentation for this trip, BFP should have paid \$34,800 (\$6,000 charter rate per hour x 5.8 hours). By failing to pay a charter rate, BFP received an in-kind contribution of \$26,889 (the \$34,800 owed less the \$7,911 paid) from GEH.

The entire amount represents a corporate contribution if GEH elected tax treatment as a corporation under Internal Revenue Service rules. However, if GEH elected to be treated for tax purposes as a partnership, or if GEH did not elect treatment as either a partnership or corporation, the contribution is considered as made by a partnership. The partnership would have made an excessive contribution in the amount of \$24,589 (\$26,889 - \$2,300).

Although documentation indicated that the flight was flown under 14 CFR part 135, the Audit staff provided BFP with an opportunity to obtain additional documentation from GEH indicating that the flight was not flown under 14 CFR part 135 and therefore not subject to the charter rate. The required information had not been obtained at the time of the exit conference.

At the exit conference, the Audit staff provided information regarding this item to BFP representatives. The representatives were requested to provide documentation demonstrating that BFP did not receive a prohibited contribution or make a payment to the U.S. Treasury. The representatives agreed to review the matter and respond accordingly.

On September 26, 2008, BFP submitted its response. BFP representatives indicated that they agreed with the finding and would write a check for \$26,889 to the U.S. Treasury.

Preliminary Audit Report Recommendation

Although BFP's response to the exit conference indicates that it agrees with the Audit staff analysis, it may, within 60 days of service of this report, provide documentation from GEH which details how GEH elected to be treated under Internal Revenue Service rules. Also, if GEH is treated as a partnership for tax purposes, information should be

provided showing how the contribution is attributed to the various partners and that only those partners' profits are decreased or losses are increased as a result of the contribution. Within the same 60 day period, BFP may also produce documentation which:

- demonstrates a lower charter rate;
- establishes a different minimum flight time requirement; and/or,
- proves that the plane was not certified for commercial service by the FAA at the time the flight occurred under 14 CFR parts 121, 129 or 135; and

Absent such a demonstration, the Audit staff recommends that BFP make a payment of \$26,889 to the U.S. Treasury.

Finding 4. Stale-Dated Checks

Summary

The Audit staff identified stale-dated checks totaling \$137,757 issued by BFP. Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP made a payment to the U.S. Treasury for stale-dated checks in the amount of \$8,457 resulting in an unresolved balance of \$129,300. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide evidence that the remaining checks are not outstanding or make a payment to the U.S. Treasury in the amount of the outstanding checks.

Legal Standard

Handling Stale-Dated (Uncashed) Checks. If a committee has issued checks that the payees (creditors or contributors) have not cashed, the committee must notify the Commission of its efforts to locate the payees and encourage them to cash the outstanding checks. The committee must also submit a check payable to the U. S. Treasury for the total amount of the outstanding checks. 11 CFR §9038.6.

Facts and Analysis

During our reconciliation of BFP's bank activity, the Audit staff identified 88 stale-dated checks totaling \$137,757 dated between January 1, 2007 and April 30, 2008.

The Audit staff provided a schedule of the stale-dated checks to BFP representatives at the exit conference. The representatives were requested to either provide evidence that the checks are not outstanding or make a payment to the U.S. Treasury for the amount of the stale-dated checks. They agreed to review the schedule to determine whether they agreed with the list and respond accordingly.

Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP submitted a check for \$8,457 to the U.S. Treasury for the stale-dated checks issued during 2007. The remaining stale dated checks (\$129,300), were all refunds of contributions to contributors issued during 2008. BFP indicated that when it was able to determine the status of these refunds, a final payment would be made to the U.S. Treasury for the amount of those checks that had not cleared and for which an obligation still exists.

Preliminary Audit Report Recommendation

The Audit staff recommends that, within 60 calendar days of service of this report, BFP provide evidence that:

- The checks or a reissued check are not outstanding. Such evidence should include copies of the front and back of the negotiated checks along with bank statements; or
- The outstanding checks have been voided by providing copies of the voided check with evidence that no obligation exists.

Absent such evidence, the Audit staff recommends that BFP make a payment of \$129,300 to the U.S. Treasury.

Finding 5. Disclosure of Disbursements

Summary

The Audit staff identified 49 disbursements, totaling \$3,779,976, that were not adequately disclosed. Problems noted included incorrect or inadequate purpose as well as incorrect addresses. Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP filed amended reports that materially corrected the disclosure of these disbursements. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide any additional comments it feels relevant to this matter.

Legal Standard

A. Reporting Operating Expenditures. When operating expenditures to the same person exceed \$200 in an election cycle, the committee must report the:

- Amount;
- Date when the expenditures were made;
- Name and address of the payee; and
- Purpose (a brief description of why the disbursement was made—see below). 2 U.S.C. §434(b)(5)(A) and 11 CFR §104.3(b)(4)(i).

B. Examples of Purpose.

- **Adequate Descriptions.** Examples of adequate descriptions of “purpose” include the following: dinner expenses, media, salary, polling, travel, party fees, phone banks, travel expenses, travel expense reimbursement, catering costs, loan repayment, or contribution refund. 11 CFR §104.3 (b)(4)(i)(A).
- **Inadequate Descriptions.** The following descriptions do not meet the requirement for reporting “purpose”: advance, election day expenses, other expenses, expense reimbursement, miscellaneous, outside services, get-out-the-vote, and voter registration. 11 CFR §104.3 (b)(4)(i)(A).

Facts and Analysis

The Audit staff identified 49 disbursements, totaling \$3,779,976, that were not adequately disclosed. For approximately half of these disbursements to its media vendor, the purpose was incorrect or inadequately disclosed. For the remaining disbursements to its credit card vendor, the address of the credit card vendor was incorrectly disclosed.

When questioned, BFP representatives responded that the person who had been primarily responsible for data entry had been dismissed for poor data entry and reporting.

At the exit conference, BFP representatives were provided a schedule detailing these items. The representatives were requested to file amended Schedules D to correct the disclosure of these transactions. They agreed to comply with the recommendation.

Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP filed amended reports that materially corrected the disclosure of the disbursements noted above.

Preliminary Audit Report Recommendation

The Audit staff recommends that, within 60 calendar days of service of this report, BFP provide any additional comments it feels relevant to this matter.

Finding 6. Reporting of Debts and Obligations

Summary

The Audit staff identified debt totaling \$870,296 that was not disclosed on Schedules D (Debts and Obligations) as required. Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP filed amended reports that materially corrected the disclosure of these debts. The Audit staff recommends that BFP provide any additional comments it feels relevant to this matter.

Legal Standard

A. Continuous Reporting Required. A political committee must disclose the amount and nature of outstanding debts and obligations until those debts are extinguished. 2 U.S.C. §434(b)(8) and 11 CFR §§104.3(d) and 104.11(a).

B. Separate Schedules. A political committee must file separate schedules for debts owed by the committee and debts owed to the committee, together with a statement explaining the circumstances and conditions under which each debt and obligation was incurred or extinguished. 11 CFR §104.11(a).

C. Itemizing Debts and Obligations.

- A debt of \$500 or less must be reported once it has been outstanding 60 days from the date incurred (the date of the transaction); the committee reports it on the next regularly scheduled report.
- A debt exceeding \$500 must be disclosed in the report that covers the date on which the debt was incurred. 11 CFR §104.11(b).

Facts and Analysis

The Audit staff identified debts totaling \$870,296 that were not disclosed on Schedules D. These debts consisted of nine transactions to two vendors, all of which were more than \$500. The debts were typically incurred during the middle of the month and paid in full the subsequent month. However, BFP did not disclose them as debts in the report covering the date on which the debt was incurred.

At the exit conference, BFP representatives were provided a schedule detailing these items. The representatives were requested to amend the reports to correct the disclosure of these transactions. They agreed to comply with the recommendation.

Subsequent to the exit conference, BFP filed amended reports that materially corrected the disclosure of the debts noted above.

Preliminary Audit Report Recommendation

The Audit staff recommends that, within 60 calendar days of service of this report, BFP provide any additional comments it feels relevant to this matter.