

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

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FEC SELECTS CALIFORNIA FOR DATA ACCESS TEST

WASHINGTON -- California's Office of Secretary of State has been selected by the Federal Election Commission as one of five to participate in a pilot program to test the sharing of its automated disclosure data base with Secretaries of State and other statutorily-mandated offices of record throughout the country. The Commission's efforts are to broaden public access to federal election finance information which is centralized in its Washington public disclosure facilities.

Secretary of State March Fong Eu was represented at a recent program planning session in Washington by Deborah Seiler, Chief of Eu's Election Division. Secretary Eu has designated her Los Angeles office as site of the test. Technical studies are under way with the starting date of the test to be announced by Secretary Eu.

Other states participating are Georgia, Massachusetts, Colorado and Illinois.

Test states will follow basic disclosure procedures established by the FEC but each Board of Election or Secretary of State's Office will set its own rules on public access to information.

Only the Federal Election Commission provides public access to all reports filed by Congressional and presidential candidates, political party committees, political action committees, those making independent expenditures and the communication costs of corporation and labor unions. Much of this information is captured by the Commission on a computerized data base.

Among computer data available to the pilot test offices will be: 1) An index which provides a cross reference to all records including receipts and disbursements relating to individual candidates; 2) An index which includes the name of each political

committee, its FEC identification number, a list of each document filed, total gross receipts and disbursements; 3) An index which includes for each political committee its connected organization, a notation if it is "qualified" as a multicandidate committee, and all Federal candidates supported, together with total aggregate contributions to or expenditures on behalf of or against each candidate.

Additional information through computer printouts will be made available to each of the test offices by the FEC.

At the end of the test, following the general election, each of the participating offices will be asked to assess the usefulness and success of the program. Results of the pilot program will permit the Federal Election Commission to measure the public and media demand for campaign finance data available through a network of disclosure offices throughout the country. The final study will be made available to Congress for use in its deliberations on expanded disclosure efforts by the FEC.

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