

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION



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VICE CHAIRMAN ELLIOTT DETAILS FEC BUDGET SITUATION TO HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON -- Federal Election Commission Vice Chairman Lee Ann Elliott told the House of Representatives Oversight Committee today that authorization of FEC's FY1996 \$29 million budget request is critical in order for the Commission to "keep up with the explosive growth in campaign spending, new laws, and the needs of the regulated community."

Testifying in her capacity as Chairman of the Commission's Finance Committee, Elliott also pointed out that the recent FY'95 rescission bill passed by the House would decrease the Commission's present operating budget by some \$2.8 million and that almost all expenditures at the agency have been put "on hold" until that issue is resolved. The Senate version of the rescission legislation replaced the funds for the FEC, but the two bills must be reconciled in conference committee.

Because of the pending rescission legislation, Elliott said the Commission has halted expansion of its computer system, canceled all travel by staff except that necessary for audit and compliance purposes, canceled all training, put all printing on hold, frozen merit awards and promotions for employees, and stopped additional equipment purchases and repairs.

Elliott commented to the Committee, "If the rescission does not develop, we will resume our management plan. Some of the money will be used for computers and electronic filing."

Regarding the FY'96 budget, the Commission Vice Chairman told the Committee that the \$29,021,000 is a modest increase of \$1.9 million over FY'95 and that if the Congress expects the Commission to soon accomplish complete computerization and electronic filing capability, this budget figure is the minimum required.

She reminded the Committee members, though, that even "...if we had electronic filing in place today, not one House or Senate candidate could file electronically with us. This is because we have identified seven statutory impediments,

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including point of entry, we are asking Congress to remove in order for us to have a program that works. With a deadline of Jan. 1, 1997, for electronic filing, the statutory changes would have to be made and through the legislative process no later than May 30, 1996."

Elliott concluded, "We expect another record election cycle for campaign spending in 1996. Because it is a Presidential year, we estimate campaign disbursements will go up another 20 percent to \$2.25 billion. We can only keep up with the explosive growth in campaign spending, new laws, and the needs of the regulated community, with the help of this Committee."

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