



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION  
Washington, DC 20463

April 23, 2009

CERTIFIED MAIL  
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

ADVISORY OPINION 2009-06

Mr. David D. Goss, Treasurer  
Jim Risch for Lieutenant Governor Committee  
5400 S. Cole Rd.  
Boise, ID 83709

Dear Mr. Goss:

We are responding to your advisory opinion request on behalf of Senator James E. Risch and the Jim Risch for Lieutenant Governor Committee (the "Committee"), concerning the application of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended (the "Act"), and Commission regulations to the soliciting, receiving, and spending of funds for the sole purpose of retiring the Committee's debt remaining from a previous State campaign.

The Commission concludes that the Committee and its agents may solicit, receive, and spend funds that exceed the amount limits contained in the Act and from sources prohibited by the Act for the sole purpose of retiring debts from Senator Risch's previous campaign for State office subject to the conditions described below.

***Background***

The facts presented in this advisory opinion are based on your letter received on March 9, 2009.

Senator Risch is a United States Senator from Idaho, having been elected to that position in the November 2008 general election. Before his election to the U.S. Senate, Senator Risch served as Lieutenant Governor of Idaho. Senator Risch successfully competed for this position in 2002 and in 2006. The Committee was established in 2002 as Senator Risch's official campaign vehicle for these contests.

According to a disclosure report the Committee filed with the Idaho Secretary of State in January 2009, as of December 1, 2008 the Committee carried an outstanding debt of \$331,319.14, which is the balance of a loan to the Committee by Senator Risch, incurred in connection with the May 28, 2002 primary election.<sup>1</sup> The Committee wishes to raise funds in accordance with Idaho State law to retire this debt. Pursuant to Idaho law, individuals, corporations and other recognized legal entities may contribute up to \$5,000 to political committees organized on behalf of candidates for statewide office, with separate \$5,000 limits applying for the primary and for the general elections. *See* Idaho Code § 67-6610A(1). Additionally, if a political committee has outstanding debt at the end of a specified reporting period, it may accept additional contributions to retire the debt, subject to the prescribed contribution limits. *See* Idaho Code § 67-6610B.

### ***Question Presented***

*May the Committee and its agents solicit, receive, and spend funds in accordance with Idaho State law for the sole purpose of retiring the Committee's debt that remains from Senator Risch's previous candidacy for State office?*

### ***Legal Analysis and Conclusions***

Yes, the Committee and its agents may solicit, receive, and spend funds in accordance with Idaho State law for the sole purpose of retiring the Committee's debt that remains from Senator Risch's previous candidacy for State office.

Under the Act, as amended by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002,<sup>2</sup> Federal candidates and officeholders may not raise or spend funds in connection with an election other than an election for Federal office unless those funds comply with the amount limitations and source prohibitions of the Act. *See* 2 U.S.C. 441i(e)(1)(B) and 11 CFR 300.62. However, the Act provides a limited exception for Federal candidates and officeholders who also seek, or have sought, State or local office. Specifically, the restriction in section 441i(e)(1)(B) does not apply to any Federal candidate or officeholder who is or was also a candidate for a State or local office so long as the solicitation, receipt, or spending of funds: (1) is solely in connection with his or her State or local campaign; (2) refers only to him or her, to other candidates for that same State or local office, or both; and (3) is permitted under State law.<sup>3</sup> 2 U.S.C. 441i(e)(2) and 11 CFR 300.63; *see also* Advisory Opinions 2007-01 (McCaskill), 2005-12 (Fattah), and 2005-02 (Corzine II).

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<sup>1</sup> *See* [http://www.sos.idaho.gov/elect/Finance/2008/08Annual/Candidate/LtGov\\_Risch.pdf](http://www.sos.idaho.gov/elect/Finance/2008/08Annual/Candidate/LtGov_Risch.pdf) (last visited Mar. 23, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Pub. L. No. 107-155, 116 Stat. 81 (Mar. 27, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Even if they meet the qualifications for this exception, however, Federal candidates or officeholders who are also candidates for State or local office are still prohibited from soliciting or receiving funds from national banks, corporations organized by authority of Congress, and foreign nationals. 2 U.S.C. 441b(a) and 441e.

Senator Risch is a Federal officeholder, and the Committee is an entity that is directly established, financed, maintained, and controlled by him.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Committee and its agents are subject to the restriction of 2 U.S.C. 441i(e)(1)(B). However, as the Commission concluded in Advisory Opinion 2007-01 (McCaskill), soliciting, receiving, and spending funds solely to retire Committee debts outstanding from previous State candidacies are actions that are solely in connection with those elections to State offices. Consequently, because the Committee intends to raise funds solely to retire debts outstanding from a previous State campaign, it satisfies criterion (1) above. Further, so long as the Committee's fundraising solicitations refer only to James E. Risch, to one or more of his former opponents in the campaign for Lieutenant Governor of Idaho, or both, then criterion (2) will be satisfied.<sup>5</sup> Finally, so long as the Committee's fundraising is permitted under Idaho law, criterion (3) will be satisfied, and thus the Committee's proposed fundraising will be permissible.<sup>6</sup>

This response constitutes an advisory opinion concerning the application of the Act and Commission regulations to the specific transaction or activity set forth in your request. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f. The Commission emphasizes that, if there is a change in any of the facts or assumptions presented and such facts or assumptions are material to a conclusion presented in this advisory opinion, then the requester may not rely on that conclusion as support for its proposed activity. Any person involved in any specific transaction or activity which is indistinguishable in all its material aspects from the transaction or activity with respect to which this advisory opinion is rendered may rely on this advisory opinion. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f(c)(1)(B). Please note the analysis or conclusions in this advisory opinion may be affected by subsequent developments in the law including, but not limited to, statutes, regulations, advisory opinions and case law. All cited advisory opinions are available on the Commission's website at <http://saos.nictusa.com/saos/searchao>.

On behalf of the Commission,

(signed)  
Steven T. Walther  
Chairman

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<sup>4</sup> The Commission has previously concluded that the exception applies to the activities of agents and to entities directly or indirectly established, financed, maintained, or controlled by, or acting on behalf of, the Federal officeholder or candidate as well as to the Federal officeholder or candidate. *See* Advisory Opinions 2007-01 (McCaskill), 2005-12 (Fattah), and 2005-02 (Corzine II).

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with Advisory Opinion 2007-01 (McCaskill), the Committee may refer to Senator Risch as "Senator Risch" in the solicitations.

<sup>6</sup> The Committee also asked whether Advisory Opinion 2007-01 (McCaskill) remains valid. The Committee may rely upon Advisory Opinion 2007-01 (McCaskill) to the extent that its conduct is not materially distinguishable from the facts as set forth in that advisory opinion. 2 U.S.C. 437f(c)(1)(B).