



# **Getting Started with FECFile** **User Manual**

## Hands-on Help with FECFile and Electronic Filing for Independent Expenditure Filers (Form 5)\*

The Getting Started with FECFile User Manual was developed as a quick reference tool for Independent Expenditure filers and to be used as a training aid.

\*This manual should be used by only those Independent Expenditure filers that file on the Form 5 and are **not** registered political committees. If you are a registered committee with a C00 identification number and file on the FEC Form 3X, please see the [Getting Started Manual for PACs and Parties](#) for further assistance.

Reports Analysis Division (800) 424- 9530 (Menu Option #5); 202-694-1130

[Submit a Question to the Reports Analysis Division & Analyst Lookup](#)

Electronic Filing Office (800) 424- 9530 (Menu Option #4); 202-694-1307

[eFiletechsupport@fec.gov](mailto:eFiletechsupport@fec.gov)

*Last Updated: 2/10/2025*

# **Table of Contents**

<b>Getting Started .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Electronic Filing.....	2
Using FECFile.....	4
Creating a New Committee File .....	4
Creating the First Report (Form 5) in a New Committee File.....	5
Creating a New Report in an Existing Committee File .....	6
FECFile Basics.....	7
<b>Entering Contributions .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Entering Independent Expenditures .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>24 and 48 Hour Reports .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Creating 24 and 48 Hour Reports .....	14
Adding Independent Expenditures to a 24 or 48 Hour Report .....	15
<b>Closing/Uploading/Amending.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Closing a Report.....	17
Uploading a Report .....	17
Amending a Report .....	18
<b>Secrets to FECFile .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Common E-Filing Mistakes!.....	20
Common Validation Errors and How to Fix Them .....	21
Warning vs. Error Messages .....	21
Reading and Understanding a Validation Message .....	21
Common Error Messages.....	22

# **Getting Started**

## **Electronic Filing**

### **Electronic filing is:**

1. Required when an entity or other person receives contributions or makes expenditures in excess of \$50,000 in the current calendar year or has reason to expect to do so.
2. Voluntary for any entity or other person that receives contributions or makes expenditures less than \$50,000 in the current calendar year. However, once a filer decides to e-file on a voluntary basis, it must continue to do so for the remainder of the calendar year, unless the Commission determines that extraordinary and unforeseeable circumstances have made it impractical for the filer to continue filing electronically.

### **Electronic filing passwords:**

1. In order to request a password, you will need a FEC ID. Because Independent Expenditure filers do not register with the FEC by filing a Statement of Organization (FEC Form 1), you will not receive your FEC ID until you have filed your first report. You can file your first report on paper if you are below the \$50,000 threshold for mandatory electronic filing or file electronically by using the online [Form 5 webform](#) for a non-registered entity or person(s) without a FEC ID. (Please note that once you use the webform, you are required to file all subsequent reports and documents electronically).
2. Once you receive your FEC ID, you can obtain an electronic filing password from the [Electronic Password Assignment System](#).
3. For assistance with passwords, please consult the [password help page](#) or contact the FEC Electronic Filing Office by phone: 800-424-9530 (menu option #4) or 202-694-1307 or by email: [eFiletechsupport@fec.gov](mailto:eFiletechsupport@fec.gov).

### **Downloading software:**

In order to download FECFile, you will need an FEC ID. Because Independent Expenditure filers do not register with the FEC by filing a Statement of Organization (FEC Form 1), you will not receive your FEC ID until you have filed your first report. You can file your first report on paper if you are below the \$50,000 threshold for mandatory electronic filing or by using the online [Form 5 webform](#) for a non-registered entity or person(s) without a FEC ID. (Please note that once you use the webform you are required to file all subsequent reports and documents electronically).

1. Go to <https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/filing-reports/fecfile-software/>, and confirm Minimum System Requirements are met.
2. Click *Download FECFile Now*.
3. Enter your FEC ID and choose *Submit*.
4. Enter the required information then click *Submit*.
5. Click the *FECFile X.X.X.X Download* button.
6. Follow your computer's download instructions.

7. Double-click the FECFile install icon and follow the installation prompts.
4. **Note:** FECFile will automatically check for the latest program updates every time you start the software. If you are having trouble downloading FECFile, please contact the Electronic Filing Office by phone: 800-424-9530 (menu option #4) or 202-694-1307 or by email: [eFiletechsupport@fec.gov](mailto:eFiletechsupport@fec.gov).

## **Video Tutorials**

[Independent Expenditures: Introduction to Reporting](#)

[Form 5: Setting Up Your Database in FECFile](#)

[Form 5: Creating and Uploading 24 & 48 Hour Reports in FECFile](#)

[Form 5: Entering Contributions, Expenditures and Uploading a Quarterly Report in FECFile](#)

[Overview of Rules & Regulations for Independent Expenditures by Persons other than Political Committees](#)

## **Reporting Resources**

[Reporting Independent Expenditures on Form 5](#)

[Making Independent Expenditures](#)

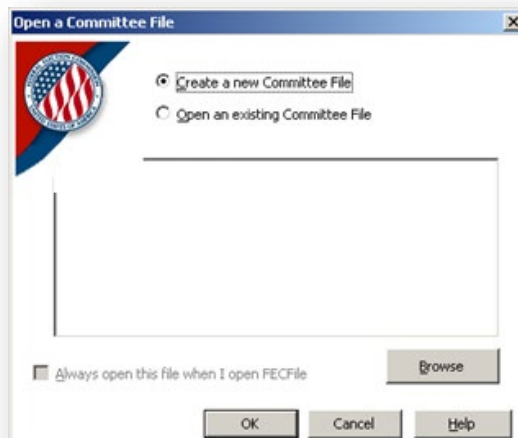
[Reporting Dates and Deadlines](#)

## Using FECFile

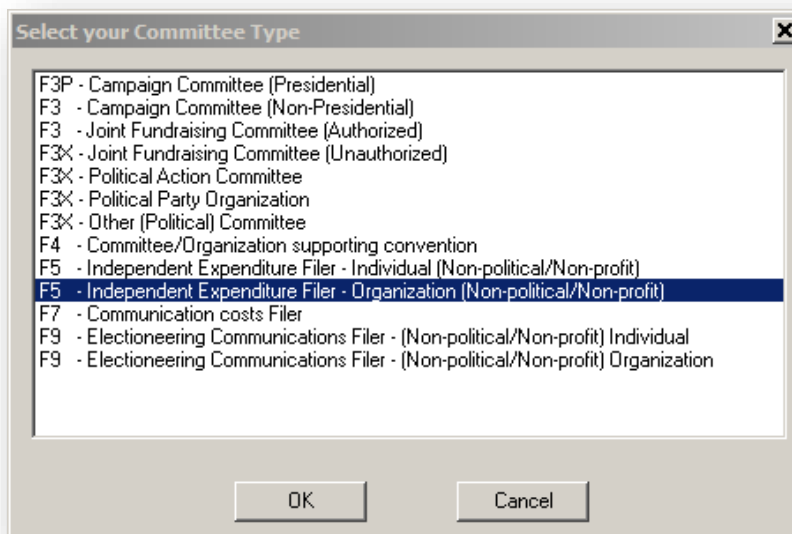
This section will lead you through the step-by-step process for setting up your electronic filing database (i.e., creating your “committee file” in FECFile), as well as creating your first Report of Independent Expenditures Made and Contributions Received (Form 5). You will need to create the quarterly Form 5 report before creating a 24 or 48 hour report (Form 5).

### Creating a New Committee File

1. Start FECFile using either the desktop icon or the computer’s Start Menu.
2. Click *Create a new committee file*. Use this file every time a report is created. You should only create one committee file per Independent Expenditure entity.
3. A window will appear to confirm the creation of a new committee file. Click *OK*.

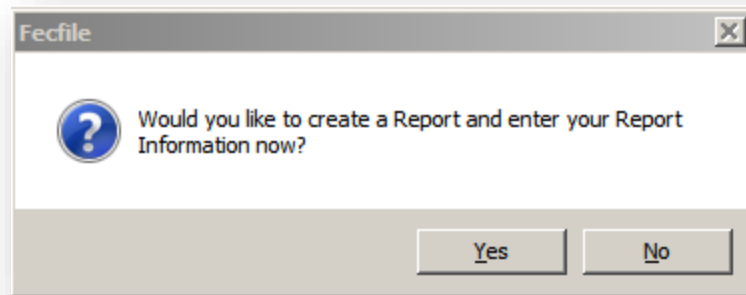


4. Choose the appropriate Form 5 (F5) filer type, Individual or Organization (shown below), from the following list and click *OK*. (If your committee type files on the Form 3X, please use the [Getting Started for PACs and Parties Guide](#) instead of this guide.)



- a. A system prompt will instruct you to enter the filer information. Select *OK* and enter the FEC ID number (C9XXXXXXX), name, and address. When finished, click *OK*.

5. Click *Yes* at the prompt.



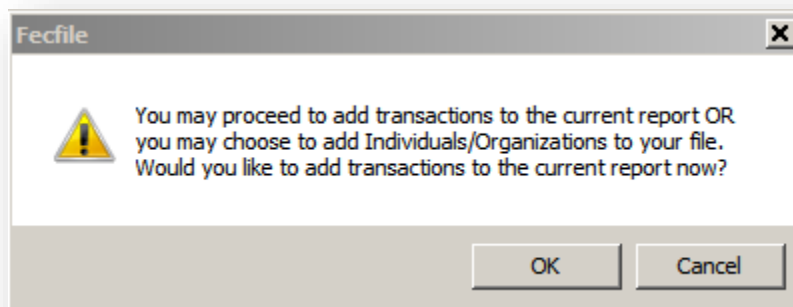
## Creating the First Report (Form 5) in a New Committee File

Independent expenditure filers are required to file quarterly reports and 24/48 hour reports when necessary. Filers will use the same process to create each of these types of reports.

1. Once you have entered information about the Independent Expenditure filer, FECFile will prompt you to create your first quarterly report of Independent Expenditures Made and Contributions Received. Select the *Type of Report* from the Report's drop down menu.
2. To sign the report, click in the *Signed by* box. Enter the name of the person completing the form (last name, first name). If the individual has not already been entered into FECFile, press Tab or Enter.
  - a. An "Individual/Organization" box will appear. Ensure that the type selected is "Individual other than a Candidate" and enter the rest of the person's information (name, address, etc.).
  - b. After entering the person's information, click *OK* to return to the *Report Information* box.
3. After all the information is entered, click *OK*.

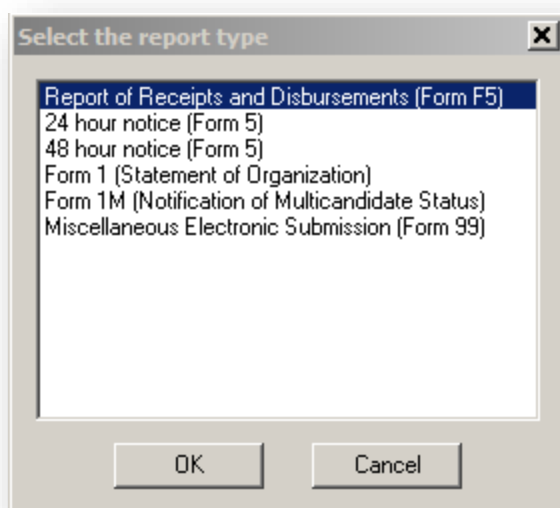
A screenshot of a "Report information" dialog box. The "Type of Report" dropdown menu is highlighted with a red box. Below it are fields for "Date From", "Date Thru", and "Election date", each with a dropdown arrow. There are also fields for "Election cycle running in" and "State" (set to "None"). A "Signed by" section contains a text box and a table with two columns. A checkbox labeled "This report discloses a new committee address" is present. At the bottom, there is a "Signed by For Schedule E" section with a text box and "OK" and "Cancel" buttons.

4. A window will appear, with options for what to do next in the report. To view the Summary Page and begin to add transactions, click *OK*. For more information, you can move to the section on "Entering Contributions" on page 11 or the section on "Entering Independent Expenditures" on page 12. To view the Individuals/Organizations screen, click *Cancel*. The FECFile Basics section on "Working with Contributors and Vendors" on page 9 will provide you information on entering contacts into your committee file.



## Creating a New Report in an Existing Committee File

1. In the "View" menu, click *Reports*.
2. In the "Edit" menu, click *New*, or right click anywhere in the Reports window and click *New*.
3. Select the report type you would like to create "Report of receipts and Disbursements (Form 5)," "24 hour notice (Form 5)," "48 hour notice (Form 5)," or "Miscellaneous Electronic Submission (Form 99)" and click *OK*. **Do not use** "Form 1" or "Form 1M." For information on entering 24 or 48 hour reports, please see page 14.

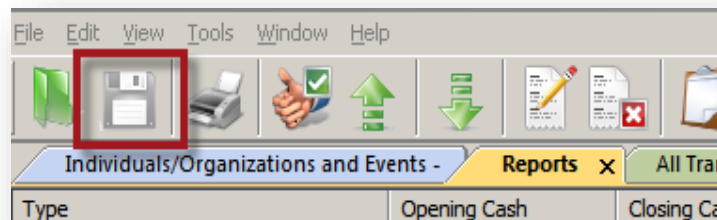


## FECFile Basics

### Saving in FECFile:

FECFile creates a database (with file extension **.DCf**), which holds the entirety of the entity's reporting history. This includes all reports, amendments, and contributors or vendors with whom the entity/filer works.

1. **Save the file as often as possible.** This will decrease the chance of massive data loss. Be sure to save the file in a location easily accessible and easily remembered. The FEC cannot recover a lost file. **The FEC strongly recommends that you frequently back up the file to an external source, such as a cloud storage service, a flash drive, external hard drive, or CD.**

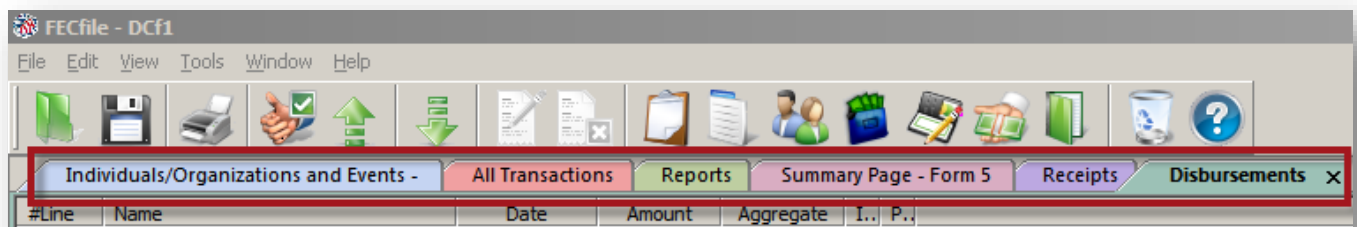


2. For each new report, open the same file that you created for the entity/filer. **Do not create a new file each time you want to create a report.** This will lead to problems with calendar year-to-date amounts and aggregate amounts. The next time you open FECFile after creating your entity's file, you will be able to select the option to *Always open this file when I open FECFile*. Checking this box will ensure you open the same file for each report.

### Using the Different Views:

FECFile is organized into six different views or windows: Individuals/Organizations and Events; All Transactions; Reports; Summary Page – Form 5; Receipts; and Disbursements. Each of these views displays a different aspect of reporting and is used to create and modify both reports and transactions. There are three different ways to access a view:

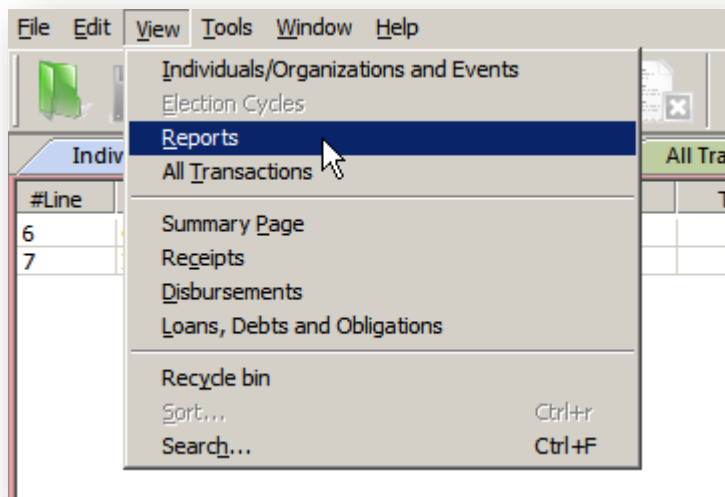
1. When FECFile first opens, tabs will be displayed underneath the icon bar. Click on the tab to access the desired view. Tabs can be rearranged by dragging them to another location on the tab bar.



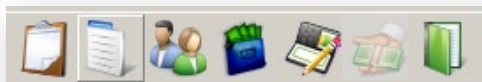


- a. In order to view two tabs side-by-side, right-click on a tab and select *Open in a Horizontal Tab* or *Open in New Vertical Group*.
- b. Tabs can be closed by clicking on the “X” in the upper right-hand corner of the tab.
- c. New tabs can be opened or re-opened by using the “View” menu or clicking on the appropriate icon (see below for a list of FECFile Views). To open all available tabs, click on *Window* in the upper left-hand corner and select *Open All*.

2. Under the “View” menu, select the desired view:



3. Click on the icon, located across the top of the screen, representing the view:



### About Each FECFile View:



**Reports View** – This view lists all reports created in the committee file. Transactions on these reports can be modified if the report is “open” (see page 18). Reports also can be amended using this view by right-clicking on the report and selecting *Amend*.



**Summary Page – Form 5 View** – This view shows both itemized (.I) and unitemized (.U) totals for this period (ThisP) and calendar year-to-date (CTD) for each line number. Transactions may be entered on line numbers by double clicking a line.

#Line	Description	ThisP.I	ThisP.U	CTD.I	CTD.U
-------	-------------	---------	---------	-------	-------



**Individuals/Organizations and Events View** – This view lists all entities entered into the database, including the information for the entity/filer making independent expenditures, contributors, other political committees, businesses, etc. Modify an entity by double clicking on it.



*Receipts View* – This view lists all receipts entered in the report currently selected in Reports View. Modify a transaction by double clicking it, or right click an entry for a list of options such as creating a new transaction, deleting a transaction, adding memo text, etc.



*Disbursements View* – This view lists all independent expenditures entered in the report currently selected in Reports View. Modify a transaction by double clicking it, or right click an entry for a list of options such as creating a new transaction, deleting a transaction, adding memo text, etc.



*All Transactions View* – This view lists all transactions entered in the committee file. Transactions are sorted by line number and name.

### **Memo Text:**

Memo text is used to provide additional information regarding reports and transactions. Memo text can be added by highlighting the report or transaction, right-clicking, and choosing *Memo Text...* from the available options.

### **Miscellaneous Electronic Submission (Form 99):**

A Form 99 is another way to provide additional information as a separate filing. Go to the *Reports* tab and right-click and select *New*. Then choose Miscellaneous Electronic Submission (Form 99) and click *OK*. Enter the additional information, choose the treasurer's name in the "Signed by" field and select "Miscellaneous Report to FEC" as the "Document Type." Follow the instructions on pages 17-18 to upload the Form 99. You can also electronically file a Form 99 using the online webform on the FEC's website: <https://webforms.fec.gov/>

### **Working with Contributors and Vendors:**

FECFile creates a database for all entities (individuals, businesses, PACs, Political Party Organizations, etc.) within the committee file. This saves the filer from repeatedly entering the contributor or vendor information if it conducts multiple transactions with a particular entity.

*There are two ways to create an entity:*

1. When entering the first transaction associated with an entity, make sure the cursor is in the "Name" field and press Tab or Enter. The "Individual/Organization Information" window will appear.
2. Using the Individuals/Organizations view, right click anywhere in the workspace and click *New* from the available options. The "Individual/Organization Information" window will appear.

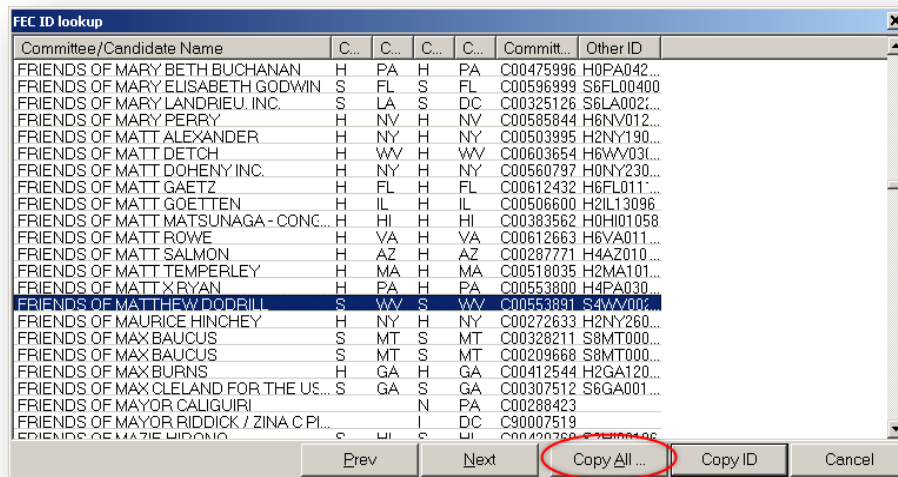
#### *Filling Out the Individual/Organization Information Box*

1. Select the correct entity type from the drop down menu at the top of the window.
  - Note: FECFile disables any field that is not required for a type of entity.
2. After entering the information, click *OK*.

## Using the FEC “Lookup” Feature:

Click *Lookup...* to access the FEC’s database of federally registered candidates and political committees. Use the feature to save time when entering information for a federal candidate or political committee.

1. In the “Individual/Organization Information” box, click *Lookup...*
2. The “FEC ID Lookup” window appears. Scroll through the list and click once on the entry to highlight it. You can also type the name of the candidate or committee in the name field and then select *Lookup* to navigate to that entry.
3. Copy all applicable information by clicking *Copy All...*
4. Unchecking boxes in the window that appears will exclude that information from copying to the entity record. Click *OK*, and all of the checked information will be copied into the entity record.



5. Click *OK* to return to the transaction screen.

The screenshot shows the form for the selected entry 'FRIENDS OF MATTHEW DODRILL'. The form contains fields for Name, Address 1, Address 2, City, State, Zip, and Candidate information (Office, State, District). The 'Copy All...' button is circled in red.

**Name:** ☒ FRIENDS OF MATTHEW DODRILL

**Address 1:** ☒ 1325 MARKET ST

**Address 2:** ☒

**City:** ☒ PARKERSBURG

**State:** ☒ WV **Zip:** ☒ 26101

**Candidate information:**

**Office:** ☒ S **State:** ☒ WV **District:** ☒ 00

**Buttons:** OK, Cancel

# Entering Contributions

1. Click the “Summary Page” icon at the top of FECFile. In the “Summary Page” window, double click on Line 6 to enter a contribution.

#Line	Description	ThisP.I	ThisP.U	CTD.I	CTD.U
6	Contributions				
7	Independent expenditures				

2. Click on the name in the list scroll box immediately beneath the name field if the entity already exists in the filer’s FECFile database. If the entity is not in the database, press Tab or Enter to add the information. Refer to page 9 for more information.
3. Enter date and amount.
4. Click *OK*.

**Contribution**

Name  
Doe, Jane  
Doe, Jane - ...

Date: 1/15/2014 Amount: 10,000 ☐ In-Kind

Description

Election: Year of Election: ☐ Memo ☒ Aggregate

Candidate/Campaign Committee

Lobbyist/Registrant Bundler ☐ F3L bundle

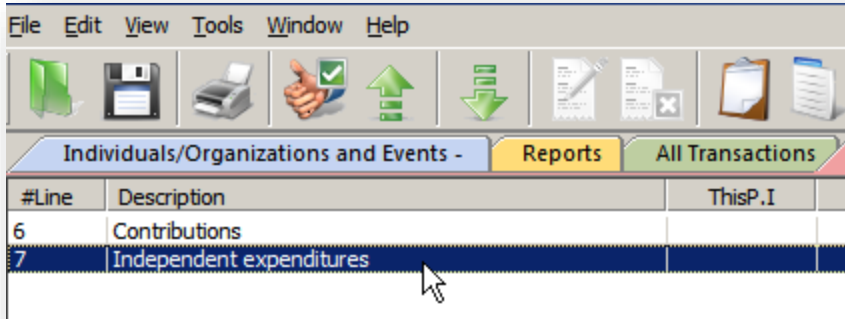
Category code

Check No. Account Identifier

Next entry... OK Cancel

# Entering Independent Expenditures

1. Go to the "Summary Page" view and double-click on Line 7.



2. An Independent Expenditure box will appear.
3. Select the payee's name from the scroll box below the "Name" field. If the entity is not in the database, press Tab or Enter to add the information.
4. Complete the dissemination date, amount, and description information. For an explanation of what constitutes the dissemination date, see the [Form 5 instructions](#) on the FEC website.
5. Indicate whether the independent expenditure supported or opposed the candidate. If the candidate is already in the dropdown box, you can select that person. Otherwise, hit Tab or Enter to create an Individual/Organization record for that candidate. You can then enter the candidate information or use the "FEC Look-up Feature." Please refer to page 9 for more information about the "FEC Look-up Feature."
6. Enter the category code, select the election type, year of election, and the candidate's office sought, state and district (if applicable). For more information about the category code, please see the [Form 5 instructions](#) on the FEC website. When reporting independent expenditures made in connection with separate

**Independent Expenditure**

Name  
  
 My Committee - ...  
 Doe, Jane - ...

Dissemination Date  Amount  ☐ Memo ☒ Aggregate

Description

Candidate ☒ Support ☐ Oppose

Category code

Election  Year of Election

Office  State  District

Next entry... OK Cancel

elections in more than one state, allocate the cost of the independent expenditure and create a separate entry for each state and election.

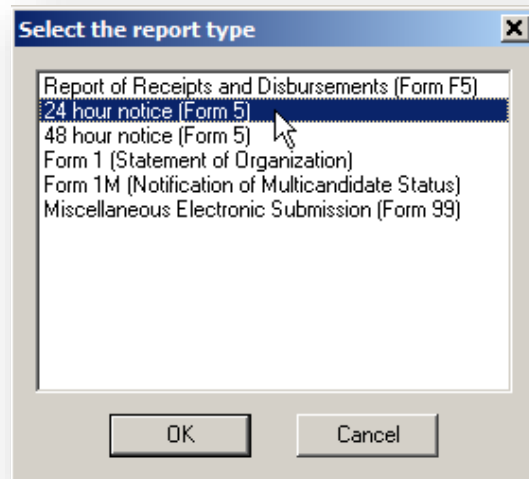
7. Click *OK*.

# 24 and 48 Hour Reports

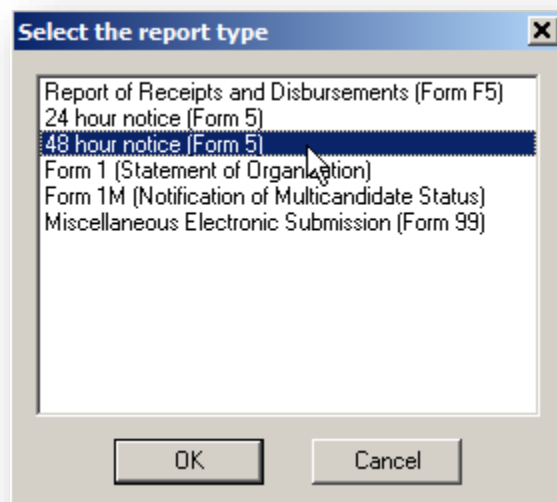
## Creating 24 and 48 Hour Reports

24 and 48 hour reports are separate filings from Form 5 quarterly reports. Both are required to be filed when the independent expenditures exceed the thresholds described in the [Form 5 instructions](#) on the FEC website.

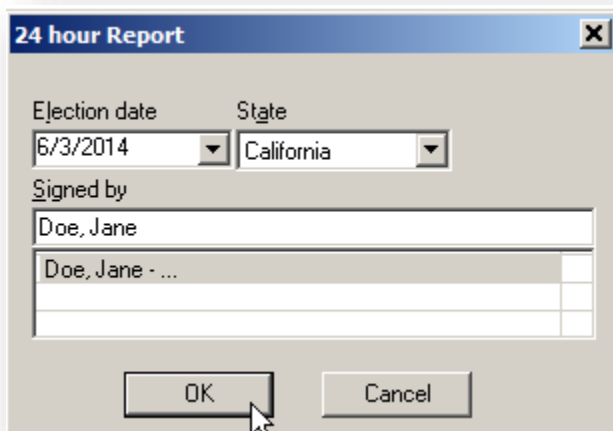
1. To prepare to create a 24 and/or 48 hour report, first create the Form 5 quarterly report for the calendar year quarter during which the independent expenditures were made. See page 6 for instructions on "Creating a New Report in an Existing Committee File."
2. To create a 24 hour report, go to the "Reports" view, right click on the white background, and click *New*. Click "24 hour notice (Form 5)" and click *OK*.



3. To create a 48 hour report, go to the "Reports" view, right click on the white background, and click *New*. Click "48 hour notice (Form 5)" and click *OK*.



4. The “24 hour Report” or “48 hour Report” box will appear; fill in the election date, the state, and enter the filer’s information in the “Signed by” box. All fields are required. If the report includes independent expenditures made in more than one state, please enter any one of the applicable states (this information is currently required in FECFile, but will not appear on the coverage page of your report).

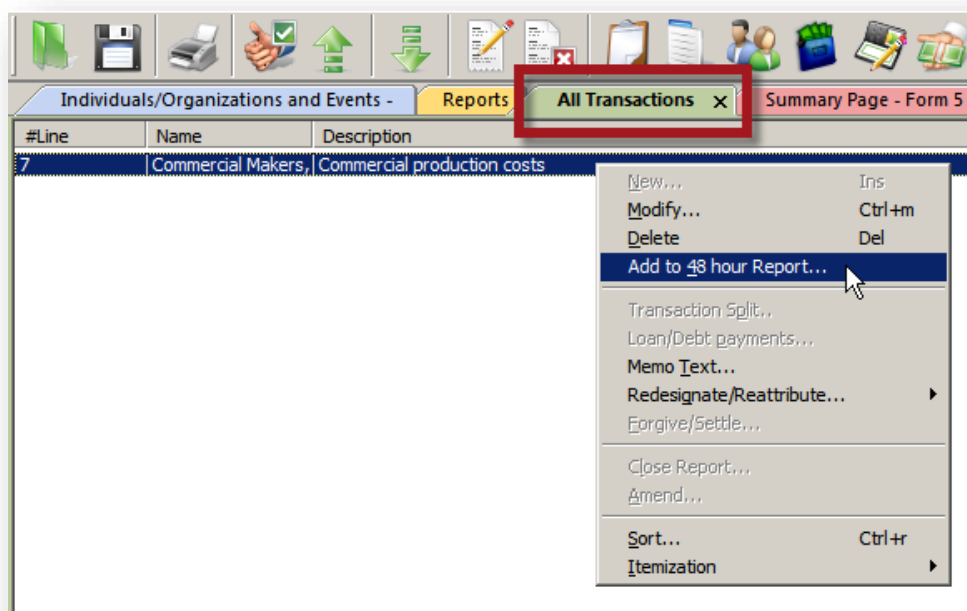


The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "24 hour Report". It has two dropdown menus: "Election date" with the value "6/3/2014" and "State" with the value "California". Below these is a text field for "Signed by" containing "Doe, Jane". There is a second, empty text field below it. At the bottom are "OK" and "Cancel" buttons.

5. Click **OK**. Note that at this point the **24/48 hour report is not complete until an independent expenditure is added to the report.**

### **Adding Independent Expenditures to a 24 or 48 Hour Report**

6. Select the “Reports” view and select the 24 or 48 hour report by clicking on it.
7. Select the “All Transactions” view and locate the independent expenditure(s) that needs to appear on the 24 or 48 hour report. If you do not see the "All Transactions" tab open, select "View" in the upper left-hand corner to open the tab. Independent expenditures that have been entered will show up on Line 7 in alphabetical order.



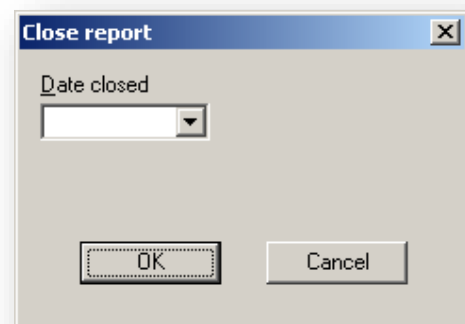
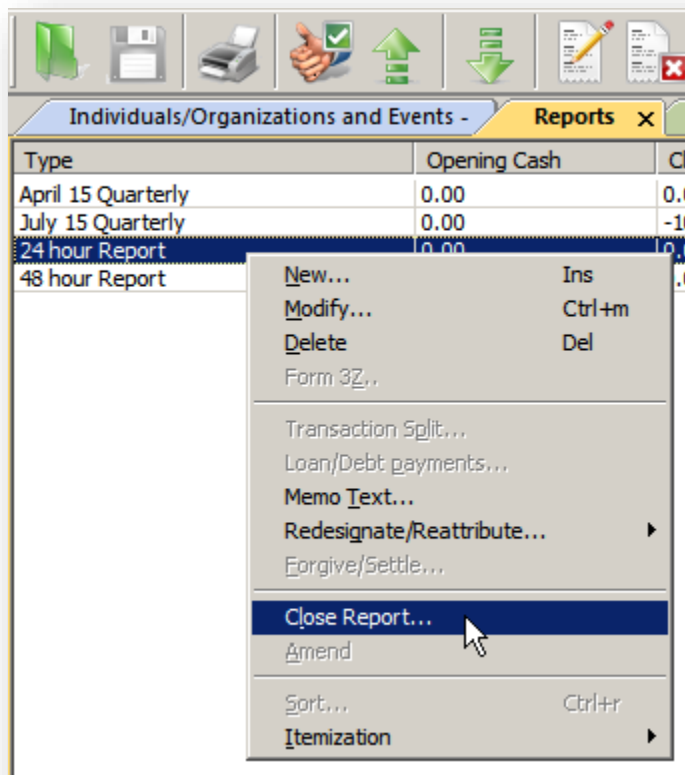


8. After finding a transaction, select the entry, right click, and click *Add to 24 hour Report* or *Add to 48 hour Report*. The Independent Expenditure transaction box will open with the previously entered information. Make sure the information for the transaction is correct and click *OK* to add to the notice. Repeat this step until all of the required independent expenditures have been added to the 24 or 48 hour report.
9. The 24 or 48 hour notice is now complete. Close and upload it in the same manner as a regular Form 5 Quarterly Report (see page 17).
10. Please note, if an entity has filed a 24 or 48 hour report, it must also file a separate quarterly report for that calendar year quarter (even if the independent expenditure information is identical).

# Closing/Uploading/Amending

## Closing a Report

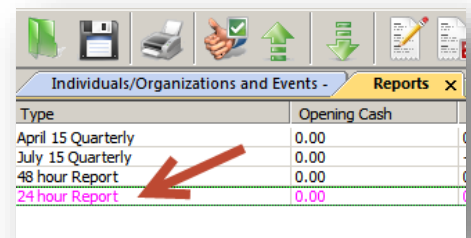
1. Go to the “Reports” view.
2. Right click on the report and click *Close Report*.



3. Enter today's date in the “Date closed” field and click *OK*. (Note: a Filing ID is only required when filing amendments and should be left blank for new reports.)

## Uploading a Report

1. First, follow the directions above for closing a report. (Closed reports should appear in pink/purple in the “Reports” view)
2. **IMPORTANT: Save the file before uploading!**



3. Click *Upload* from the “File” menu, or click the Upload icon.



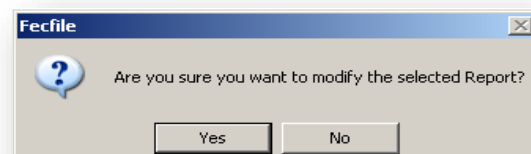
4. Enter the [password](#) (see page 2), 9-digit FEC ID number, and email address. You must confirm the password and email address by entering them a second time or the report will not upload.
5. Unless otherwise directed by the FEC’s Electronic Filing Office, leave “Web service” as the Filing Method and then click *Submit Filing to FEC*. (Note: “This filing amends” field should not be filled in for new reports.)
6. Save the committee file after the report uploads.

## Amending a Report

Amend a report when changes need to be made to a report that has already been uploaded. If the report has not yet been uploaded, right click on the report to uncloset it and make the necessary modifications.

### Creating an Amendment:

1. Go to the “Reports” view.
2. Right click the report to be amended and then click *Amend*.
3. Click *OK* on the “Report Information” box and click *YES* when prompted “Are you sure you want to modify the selected Report?”
  - a. Note: reports originally filed on paper before the filer crossed the electronic filing threshold cannot be amended electronically.
  - b. The report will now have an A1, A2, etc. in front of it. A1 is for the first amendment, A2 is for the second amendment, and so on
  - c. Note: these reports will automatically be generated, but not automatically uploaded. Also, these additional amendments need not be uploaded unless there is a change in any of the dollar figures (most commonly: calendar year-to-date or aggregate totals). If there are any changes in the dollar figures for subsequent reports, please upload those reports as well.



### Modifying Transactions for the Amendment:

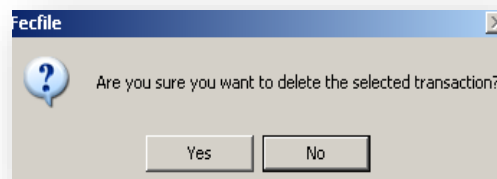
1. Locate the transaction you want to modify from the "Receipts," "Disbursements," or "All Transactions" tab.
2. Double click on the transaction.
3. Make the desired changes to the transaction and click *OK*.
4. When prompted, click *Yes* to modify the selected transaction.

### Adding New Transactions for the Amendment:

1. As with a new report, go to the "Summary Page" view and double click on the appropriate line for that transaction.
2. Enter the transaction information and click *OK*.

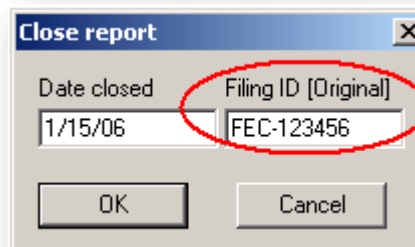
### Deleting Transactions from an Amended Report:

1. Locate the transaction you want to delete from the "Receipts," "Disbursements," or "All Transactions" tab.
2. Right click on the transaction and click *Delete*.
3. When prompted, click *Yes* to delete the selected transaction.



### Filing an Amended Report:

1. An amended report is filed like a new report: Close the report, and then choose *Upload* from the File menu.
2. If the original report was created using FECFile, the software will automatically fill out the "Filing ID" field.
  - a. Do not alter this number unless instructed by an FEC analyst or the FEC's Electronic Filing Office.
  - b. If instructed to alter the number, or if the number does not appear in the box, the filing ID is located on the FEC's website (<https://www.fec.gov/data/filings/>). Search your FEC ID number. The Filing ID appears under the "Version" column.



# **Secrets to FECFile**

## **Common E-Filing Mistakes!**

### **Passwords**

- Remember to obtain an [electronic filing password](#) as soon as possible. Due to the extra security requirements, it may take up to two business days for the FEC to complete electronic filing password requests.
- Don't wait until the last minute to apply for a password or to apply for a new one if necessary.
- Remember the entity/filer's password and keep it secure: the FEC cannot look up misplaced or forgotten passwords; the report filer must request a new one.

### **Filing at the last minute**

- Any problem, whether it's technical or non-familiarity with the software, can be difficult to deal with during the rush of a deadline week. It is advisable to always file as early as possible, especially the first time the entity files electronically.
- Be aware of upcoming reports. Please consult the [Dates and Deadlines](#) page and [Reporting Independent expenditures on Form 5](#) page.

### **Email receipts confirm filing has been received**

- After uploading the report electronically, a receipt will be sent to the email address entered when uploading the report. Assume that the report was not successfully filed if no receipt is received. Call the Electronic Filing Office (202-694-1642, Option #3) if more than a few minutes pass without receiving a receipt.
- The receipt is proof of filing. Print it out and keep it.
- You can look up your entity's filings at any time using the FEC website: [https://www.fec.gov/data/filings/?data\\_type=efiling](https://www.fec.gov/data/filings/?data_type=efiling)

### **Save and validate data set early and often**

- Doing this through the process of report creation will ensure proper and consistent data entry as well as prevent the loss of work due to unforeseen computer problems, i.e., freezes, crashes, etc.

### **Back up the data file!**

- The file that contains all of the entity/filers reports, the "Data File" (\*.dcf), should be backed up to an external source.
- It is very difficult and time consuming to recreate the committee file if it is lost.

## Common Validation Errors and How to Fix Them

### Warning vs. Error Messages

There are two different types of validation errors: **warning messages** and **error messages**.

#### Warning messages:

These messages are a result of possible incorrect/missing information in the report. The user can choose to correct the issues before uploading the report. However, these warnings do not prevent the filer from uploading a report.

#### Error messages:

These messages result from more serious problems and prevent the user from uploading the report until the errors are corrected.

### Reading and Understanding a Validation Message

Each warning or error message contains basic information that allows the user to pinpoint which transaction is causing the issue. It also gives a brief description of the error. For example:

```
Form{Item}: F56 {Johnson}  
Field Name: #011 Contributor Street 1  
Warning is Required, but field is Empty
```

The **Form {Item}** field identifies where the transaction causing the error is on the report. In the example above, the transaction is on **Form 5**, Line **6** and is specifically identified as “Johnson.” **Field Name** identifies the aspect of the transaction – in this case the street address field for the contributor – that is causing the problem. The last line identifies what type of message this is (**Warning**) and describes what caused the problem (**is Required, but field is Empty**).

In order to correct this problem, the user should find the specific transaction and edit it to disclose the street address for the contributor with the last name Johnson.

The FEC’s website includes a more extensive list of commonly found warning and error messages along with brief descriptions and solutions.

<https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/filing-reports/validation-errors-explained/>

## Common Error Messages

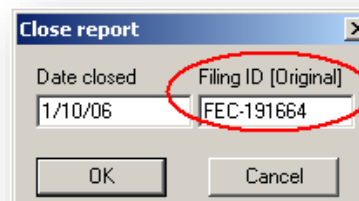
Below is a list of common error messages that committees encounter and the steps that need to be taken in order to correct the errors. Please remember that all error messages must be corrected before you can upload your report.

### *Filing must be in the current FEC format*

- This indicates that you are using an outdated version of FECFile.
- FECFile users will need to download the latest version of the software from the FEC's website (<https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/filing-reports/fecfile-software/>).

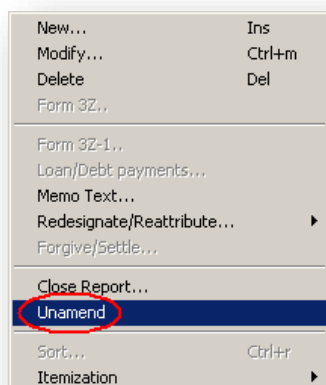
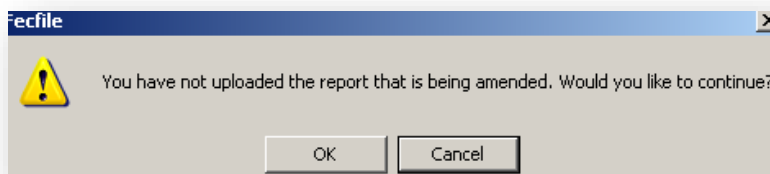
### *Amended filing must have an ID of the "Original"*

- This indicates that the user is trying to submit an amendment absent the original report ID number. The original report ID number **must** be used. If you are properly amending existing reports in the committee file, the original filing ID should appear automatically.
- If the user cannot locate his receipt for the original report, the ID number can be located on the FEC's Electronic Filing Report Retrieval website under the "Version" column (<https://www.fec.gov/data/filings/>).
- Once you have located the original filing ID, you will need to open, and then re-close your report so you can enter the filing ID (see right).
- NOTE: If this original report ID number is entered incorrectly, system errors will occur on upload.



### *Amended filing must have an "Amendment Number"*

- This means that either the amendment indicator is missing or incorrect. The first amendment will be A1, and each subsequent amendment will be numbered in sequence.
- This error most likely occurred because you did not properly create an amendment or amended a report before it was filed.
- Don't amend a report that you have not uploaded. FECFile will warn you with this message – click *Cancel*.



- In the "Reports" view, right click on the report you are trying to file. If the report is closed, unclosed it. Right click again and click *Unamend*.

- Repeat this process until your report is at the correct numbered amendment

***Validation terminated! – Over 32,000 problems found!***

- This indicates that 32,000+ errors have been found. The threshold for total errors for the system is 32,000; therefore, the first 32,000 errors will be listed in accordance with their severity.
- If you receive this message please contact your reports analyst or the FEC electronic filing office.

***ID# \_\_\_\_\_ NOT correct FEC ID# format***

- This indicates that the FEC ID number used is not in the correct format.
- To correct this error, you will need to edit your FEC ID number. To do this, go to the “Individuals/ Organizations” view and locate your filing entity. Double-click on your entity name (it should be in red). Make sure the FEC ID number is correct. It might help to use the FEC Lookup feature.
- NOTE: (correct example: C91234567) - The “C” must be capitalized.

The screenshot shows a web application interface. On the left, there is a list of entities under the heading 'Name'. The first entity, 'My FEC Committee- FILING COMMITTEE', is highlighted in red. Below it are other entities: 'Public Communications', 'Exempt', 'Voter Drive', 'Administrative', 'Doe, John', 'FedEx-Kinkos', 'HERSETH, STEPHANIE', 'HERSETH FOR CONGRESS', 'Johnson, Jane', and 'OBAMA, BARACK'. On the right, there is a detailed view for the selected entity, titled 'Political Action Committee - FILER'. It includes a 'Type' dropdown menu set to 'Political Action Committee'. Below this is a 'Committee ID (eg. C12345678)' field containing the value 'C00396945', which is circled in red. A 'Lookup...' button is next to the field.

***{Field} is required, but field is empty***

- This indicates that information is required to be entered in a particular field, but has not been.
- Locate the transaction and fill in the field.

***Extraneous data follows last field***

- This usually indicates a technical problem, generally involving invalid characters.
- You should call the Electronic Filing Office if you receive this error (800-424-9530 Ext. 1307).
- NOTE: Only characters between ASCII 22 and ASCII 126 are acceptable. The ASCII 32 - 126 used to be the only characters allowed; however, the foreign language alphabet and punctuation characters are also allowed. Specifically, ASCII characters 32 - 168 are allowed (excluding 127 and the series 157 through 159). Also, 173 is allowed.

***Invalid double-quote surround text field – OR - Embedded double-quotes (") not allowed***

- This indicates that there are a set quotes around a text field where there should not be.
- Locate the transaction/field and take out the quotes.



- NOTE: Quotes are used as part of the data delimiter. Since the introduction of a level-8 message that says "Embedded double-quotes (") not allowed", this message only applies to the very last field of a CSV string and only in the instance where a begin-quoted text is not terminated with an end-quote. (Example: falling within the maximum length of that last field.)
- ADDITIONAL NOTE: Any field can have begin/end quotes (they are necessary for text that has embedded commas). However, any field that has surrounding quotes may not also contain double quotes anywhere within the text. Validator is only trapping "embedded quotes" within "text fields" which have surrounding begin-quotes and end-quotes. For example [,""] is a case of an embedded double-quote, but [",] is not.

***Body of text exceeds maximum of 20,000 characters (F99 filings)***

- F99 (Miscellaneous text document) filings are limited to 20,000 characters in length.
- To correct this, either shorten your Form 99 filing or file more than one.

***Leading blanks {e.g. " TEXT"} not allowed***

- This indicates that there are blanks prior to data; this is not allowed.
- Locate the transaction/field and delete the spaces that precede the first word in the file.

***Bad date – \_\_\_\_\_ not YYYYMMDD format***

- This indicates the user has entered a date in the incorrect format.
- Locate the transaction and re-enter the date trying this format: MM/DD/YYYY.

***\_\_\_\_\_ is not a real date***

- This indicates that the user has entered an invalid date.
- Locate the transaction and enter a valid date.

***Invalid amount format: \_\_\_\_\_ – OR – Non-numeric data in numeric field***

- This indicates that the user has entered values other than numbers and decimals.
- Locate the transaction and enter only numbers and one decimal point. FECFile will issue a warning before this error is made. (See right)
- NOTE: Dollar signs and commas are not permitted.



***\_\_\_\_\_ is an invalid year (CCYY) format***

- This indicates the user has entered the year in the incorrect format.

- Locate the transaction and make sure the year referenced in the date field is in a four-digit format.

***District "\_\_" is not 2-digit numeric format***

- This indicates the user failed to enter the congressional district as two digits.
- Locate the transaction, and make sure the congressional district field has two digits (ex: 04, 11). Using the FEC Lookup feature might make things easier.