

## Candidate Committees

This page provides answers to frequently asked questions pertaining to authorized committees of candidates for federal office. If you don't find an answer to your question here, please contact the FEC's Information Division, toll free at 800-424-9530 or by e-mail at [info@fec.gov](mailto:info@fec.gov). Committee staff may also speak with the Campaign Finance Analyst who reviews the committee's reports by calling the Reports Analysis Division, toll free at 800-424-9530 (press 5). Additionally, electronic filers may contact the Commission's Electronic Filing Office for technical assistance, toll free at 800-424-9530 (press 4).

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## **General Reporting Questions**

### **I am a new candidate. When do I need to register and start filing?**

A person triggers registration and reporting responsibilities when campaign activity exceeds \$5,000 in either contributions or expenditures. (Money raised and spent to test the waters, or explore the feasibility of becoming a candidate, does not count toward this threshold until a person decides to run for federal office or conducts activities indicating he/she is actively campaigning rather than testing the waters.) (11 CFR § 100.3(a)(3) and 102.13(a)(2)).

Within 15 days after an individual becomes a candidate as described, he/she must designate a principal campaign committee on the Statement of Candidacy (FEC Form 2) (11 CFR § 101.1(a) and 102.12(a)). Commission Regulations require that the name of the principal campaign committee include the name of the candidate who authorized the committee. (11 CFR § 102.14(a)) Within 10 days after it has been designated by the candidate, the principal campaign committee must file the Statement of Organization (FEC Form 1) (11 CFR § 102.1(a)).

Authorized committees of candidates must file quarterly disclosure reports on FEC Form 3 (for House of Representatives and Senate candidates) or Form 3P (for Presidential candidates). The first report filed by the committee should include any receipts and disbursements made during the "testing the waters" (or exploratory) period. The coverage period of the first report should be adjusted to date back to the beginning of the committee's financial activity.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, page 5](#). [PDF]

[Instructional video on candidate registration](#)

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### **What indicates that a candidate is campaigning and no longer "testing the waters"?**

The following activities are examples of "testing the waters," or exploring the feasibility of running for office: polling, making phone calls, traveling around the district, and raising money to pay for this activity under the federal contribution limits. Individuals conducting solely "testing the waters" activity are not required to register and report, even if they raise/spend more than \$5,000 (11 CFR §100.72(a) and 100.131(a)).

The following activities are examples of campaigning:

Making or authorizing statements referring to yourself as a candidate ("Smith in 2016" or "Smith for Senate");

Using general public political advertising to publicize your intention to campaign;

Raising more money than what is reasonably needed to test the waters or amass funds (seed money) to be used after candidacy is established;

Conducting activities over a protracted period of time or shortly before the election;

Taking action to qualify for the ballot (11 CFR §100.72(b) and 100.131(b)).

Once an individual becomes a candidate, funds raised or spent to test the waters apply to the \$5,000 threshold. All money raised and spent in the exploratory period has to be reported on the first FEC report (beginning coverage date of the report should be the date of first financial activity).

For more information, please consult:

[Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, page 1.](#) [PDF]

[Instructional Video on Testing the Waters](#)

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### **When do I submit my reports?**

After registration, candidate campaign committees must file reports on Form 3 (for House of Representatives and Senate candidates) or Form 3P (for Presidential candidates) to disclose all of their activity. The reporting schedule can be found on the [FEC web site](#). Committees of House of Representatives and Senate candidates file on a quarterly schedule.

Committees of Presidential candidates must file monthly during the election year if they have received or anticipate receiving contributions or making expenditures aggregating \$100,000 or more (11 CFR §104.5(a) and (b)). During the non-election year, committees of Presidential candidates may file on either a quarterly or monthly schedule, and may change their filing frequency once per calendar year by filing a request with the Commission. For more information please consult the [RAD Processes page](#).

All authorized committees must continue filing until terminated, even if the candidate decides to retire, withdraws from the race prior to the primary election, loses the primary, or drops out of the race prior to the general election. Committees seeking to terminate their reporting obligation must file a termination report or a termination request, and must continue to file reports until the Commission notifies them in writing that their termination report or request has been accepted.

In addition to quarterly reports, a committee may be required to pre- and post-election reports and 48-Hour Notices in an election year.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 80-83.](#) [PDF]

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## Where can I find the registration and reporting forms?

Registration and reporting forms are available on the [FEC website](#), via our automated [Fax Line](#) (call 800-424-9530 ext. 1100) and by mail (call 800-424-9530 ext. 1100). Electronic filers may download free FEC File software from our [electronic filing web page](#).

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## Do I have to file electronically?

Committees must file electronically if the campaign raises or spends more than \$50,000 in any calendar year, or has reason to expect to do so (11 CFR §104.18(a)). The electronic filing requirement does not apply to Senate committees or Joint Fundraising committees supporting only Senate candidates that are required to file with the Secretary of the Senate.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 83-85\[PDF\]](#) and our [electronic filing web page](#).

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## Where do I file reports?

Committees supporting House of Representatives and Presidential candidates must file reports with the FEC via mail at 1050 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20463 or file electronically. Committees supporting Senate candidates must file reports on paper with the Secretary of the Senate, Office of Public Records, 232 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510-7116. Mail addressed to the Secretary of the Senate should be sent to: Office of Public Records, P.O. Box 77578, Washington, DC 20013-7578.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, page 80. \[PDF\]](#)

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## Where can I find the latest contribution limits?

Click on the following link to view the contribution limits for the [2017-2018 election cycle](#).

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## What is my election cycle?

Candidate committees must aggregate their activity on an election cycle basis. The election cycle starts on the day after the last general election for the office sought by the candidate and ends on the next general election date for

the office sought. Thus, the length of the election cycle varies depending on office sought (i.e., two years for House committees, six years for Senate committees, and four years for Presidential committees) (11 CFR §100.3(b)).

For instance, a 2018 House committee would use the election cycle dates of 11/9/2016 - 11/6/2018. A Senate committee supporting a candidate for re-election in 2018 would use the election cycle dates of 11/7/2012 - 11/6/2018. If your committee was involved or is currently involved in a special election, please note that the date after the special election (or the special runoff election) begins a new election cycle. If you have any questions about your election cycle, please contact your RAD Analyst.

For more information, please consult the [FEC Form 3 Instructions](#) and [FEC Form 3P Instructions](#). [PDF]

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### **Where, when, and on what form should a joint fundraising committee that supports House, Senate and/or Presidential candidates file?**

Joint fundraising committees (JFCs) that only support federal candidates are considered authorized committees, and must file on Form 3 (11 CFR 102.13(c)). These JFCs must follow the filing schedule for authorized committees. JFCs that support both federal candidates and other party or non-party political committees (such as PACs) must file on Form 3X and follow the [filing schedule for unauthorized committees](#) (11 CFR §104.5(a) and (c)). JFCs supporting only Senate candidates must file with the Secretary of the Senate. All other JFCs must file with the FEC.

For more information, please consult this [Instructional Video on the rules governing joint fundraisers](#).

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### **I am a candidate who already filed a Statement of Candidacy (FEC Form 2) for the next regularly scheduled election, but I am also participating in an off-election year Special Election. What do I need to do?**

Candidates running in off-election year special elections who have received contributions or made expenditures over \$5,000 for the special election should file a Statement of Candidacy ([FEC Form 2](#)) indicating the year of the special election and designating a principal campaign committee to raise and spend funds for the special election.

If the candidate is also running in regularly scheduled elections and has received contributions or made expenditures over \$5,000 for those elections, an additional Statement of Candidacy (FEC Form 2) should be filed to indicate the year of the regularly scheduled election. The candidate can designate the same principal campaign committee or designate a new committee to raise and spend funds for the regularly scheduled elections.

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### **I am a candidate who has already filed the Statement of Candidacy (Form 2) and my Principal Campaign Committee (PCC) has filed a Statement of Organization (Form 1). Due to redistricting, I will be running in a different district. What do I need to do?**

Candidates and PCCs running in regularly scheduled elections in states that have gone through a redistricting process should submit an Amended Statement of Organization AND Statement of Candidacy (Forms 1 and 2) to reflect the new district.

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**My committee files electronically and needs to amend its Statement of Organization (Form 1). Since the original Form 1 was filed on paper should the amendment also be filed on paper?**

If a committee is an electronic filer, it is required to file all subsequent reports and documents electronically. This includes amendments to the Statement of Organization (Form 1). Note that some electronic filing software may show the first electronically filed Form 1 as "new" rather than "amended." However, if a Form 1 was previously filed, the Statement of Organization will be identified by the FEC as an amendment upon upload.

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**Are unopposed, independent, and third-party candidates entitled to a separate primary contribution limit? What are the pre-primary election reporting requirements for such candidates?**

Unopposed and independent candidates are still entitled to a separate contribution limit for the primary (or convention, if in a state that is holding one to nominate candidates for the general). Unopposed candidates must consider the date on which the election is held to be the date of the election for purposes of designating contributions to the primary. Independent or third party candidates may choose one of these dates to be their "primary" date: (1) The last day on which, under state law, a candidate may qualify for a position on the general election ballot; (2) The date of the last major party primary, caucus or convention in the state; or (3) For third party candidates, the date of the nomination by their party. In terms of reporting, both unopposed and independent/third party candidates, must file the pre-election report applicable to their state and any 48-hour notices for contributions of \$1,000 or more, even if they are not actually participating in a primary election or nominating convention.

Click on the following link to view the contribution limits for the [2017-2018 election cycle](#).

## **Reporting on Schedule A - Receipt Schedule**

**What date should I use for the "Date of Receipt" of a contribution on the report? When is a contribution considered made?**

The "Date of Receipt" field on Schedule A should show the date the candidate, campaign committee, or an agent acting on their behalf actually received the contribution. This is the date used by the campaign for reporting purposes. The date a contribution is made is when the contributor relinquished control over the contribution by either delivering or mailing it to the candidate, committee, or their agent. For mailed contributions, the date of the postmark is considered to be the date when the contributor relinquished control of the contribution (11 CFR §110.1(b)(6)).

If the campaign wishes to use the postmark as evidence of the date a contribution was made, then the envelope or a copy of the postmark must be retained. Campaigns can use the postmark as evidence that a contribution that was received after the date of the election was actually made by the contributor on or before the date of the election. In such cases, campaigns should note the postmark date for the contribution on Schedule A of the FEC report. Campaigns should pay particular attention to postmarks near election day, as the date is used for reporting purposes as well as the calculation of net debts, if applicable (see the section on collecting contributions to [retire campaign debts](#) below).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 22-23.](#)  
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### **What is considered an earmarked contribution? How do we report contributions through conduits?**

An earmarked contribution is one which the contributor directs (either orally or in writing) to a clearly identified candidate through an intermediary or conduit. An intermediary/conduit could be an individual or a political committee (11 CFR §110.6(b)).

Earmarked contributions are reported as receipts from the original contributor. When a committee receives an earmarked contribution(s) through an allowable conduit, each individual contribution must be itemized when the individual's total contributions to your committee aggregate over \$200 per election cycle. This itemization must include the full name, address, occupation, and employer of the individual contributor along with the date the contribution(s) was received by the conduit. Any unitemized contributions received through the conduit must be included in your totals on Line 11(a)(ii) of Form 3 or Line 17(a)(ii) of Form 3P.

In addition, information regarding the conduit or intermediary for each contribution must be itemized on Schedule A as a memo entry whenever the total earmarked through a conduit exceeds \$200 election cycle-to-date. The conduit's full name and address (and occupation and employer if the conduit is an individual) must also be provided, along with the date the contribution(s) was received by your committee and the total amount of earmarked contributions received from the conduit (11 CFR §110.6(c)).

Furthermore, certain "bundled" contributions may trigger additional disclosure of the identity of the person who raised the bundled contribution on FEC Form 3L, as summarized in the section on "[Reporting Requirement for 'Bundled' Contributions](#)" below.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, Appendix A.](#)  
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### **My committee is affiliated with a joint fundraising committee. How do we report transfers-in from that committee?**

First, make sure the joint fundraising committee (JFC) is properly disclosed on your most recent FEC Form 1 and 2 (Statement of Organization and Statement of Candidacy). Report the net proceeds received from the JFC as a transfer-in on Schedule A supporting Line 12 of Form 3 or Line 18 of Form 3P. Additionally, you must provide a memo Schedule A to itemize your committee's share of the gross contributions received through the JFC. The memo schedule should itemize each individual who has contributed an aggregate in excess of \$200 during the election cycle to your committee and provide the amount of unitemized contributions received. The memo schedule should also itemize your committee's share of all contributions from political committees, regardless of amount (11 CFR §102.17(c)).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, Appendix C.](#)  
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## What is the limit for contributions from partnerships?

A candidate's authorized committee may not accept contributions from a partnership in excess of \$2,700 per election. In addition, a partnership contribution counts proportionately against each participating partner's own limit with respect to the candidate. Contributions made by individual partners from their own funds, rather than the partnership funds, do not count against the partnership's limit. 11 CFR 110.1(b)(1) and (e). Contributions from professional corporations and from partnerships using the funds of corporate, foreign national, or federal contractor members are prohibited. 11 CFR 110.1(e), 110.20, 114.2, and 115.4.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, Appendix B\[PDF\]](#)

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## How do I report a contribution from a partnership?

If a contribution from a partnership exceeds or aggregates over \$200 during an election cycle, the committee must itemize the contribution on a Schedule A supporting Line 11(a)(i) of Form 3 or Line 17(a)(i) of Form 3P. Additionally, if an individual partner's share of the contribution exceeds or aggregates over \$200 in the same election cycle, the committee must disclose, as a memo entry, itemized information on the partner (name, address, occupation, name of employer, amount of contribution, and aggregate total). If no partner's individual attribution exceeds \$200 in the election cycle, you should note that using memo text or an additional description field (11 CFR §104.8 and 110.1(e)).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, Appendix B. \[PDF\]](#)

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## What is "Best Efforts" and how do I establish "Best Efforts"?

"Best efforts" is the demonstration that your committee has actively tried to acquire and report information concerning your contributors' names, addresses, and employer/occupation information.

To establish "best efforts," your committee must follow these guidelines (11 CFR §104.7):

Your original solicitation must include a clear and conspicuous request for the contributor information and must inform the contributor of the requirements of federal law for the reporting of such information.

If the information is not provided, you must make one follow-up, stand alone effort to obtain this information, regardless of whether the contribution(s) was solicited or not. This effort must occur no later than 30 days after receipt of the contribution and may be in the form of a request via mail, e-mail, or telephone, documented in writing. The requests must:

- Clearly ask for the missing information, without soliciting a contribution;

- Inform the contributor of the requirements of federal law for the reporting of such information, and

- If the request is written, include a pre-addressed post card or return envelope.

If you receive contributor information after the contribution(s) has been reported, you have two options:

- On your next report, file a separate Schedule A listing the contributors with the additional information as memo entries. Clearly denote "Best Efforts" in the additional text field.

- File an amendment to the original report disclosing the information.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 76-77.](#)  
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### **How can a prohibited or excessive contribution that has been deposited into the campaign's account be remedied?**

A prohibited contribution must be refunded within 30 days of receipt (11 CFR §103.3(b)(1) and (2)).

An excessive contribution can be refunded, redesignated or reattributed within 60 days of receipt (11 CFR §103.3(b)(3)), 11 CFR §110.1(b) and (k), and 11 CFR §110.2(b)). With a redesignation, the contributor instructs the committee to use the excessive portion of a contribution for an election other than the one for which the funds were originally given. With a reattribution, the contributor instructs the committee to attribute an excessive portion of a joint contribution to another individual. See the next two sections for more information on redesignations and reattributions.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 24-27.](#)  
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### **What is presumptive redesignation or reattribution?**

Presumptive redesignation and presumptive reattribution allow the committee to designate a contribution to a different election or attribute a contribution to another account holder without first seeking a signature from the original contributor. Committees can use presumptive redesignation and reattribution in the following circumstances.

#### **Presumptive Redesignation**

When an individual or non-multicandidate committee makes an excessive contribution to a candidate's authorized committee, the campaign 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 (11 CFR §110.1(b)(5)(ii)(B)(1)-(4)).

The committee is required to notify the contributor in writing of the presumptive redesignation within 60 days of the treasurer's receipt of the contribution, and must offer the contributor the option to receive a refund instead (11 CFR §110.1(b)(5)(ii)(C)). The committee should retain full-size photocopies of the check or written instrument, of any signed writings that accompanied the contribution, and of the notices sent to the contributors.

Please note: presumptive redesignation can only be made within the same election cycle. Also, presumptive redesignation is not an option when the contributor is a multicandidate committee.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 24-27.](#) [PDF]

### **Presumptive Reattribution**

If a committee receives an excessive contribution made via a written instrument that has more than one individual's name imprinted on it but only one signature, the committee may attribute the permissible portion to the signer. The committee may make a presumptive reattribution of the excessive portion to the other individual whose name is imprinted on the written instrument, without obtaining a second signature, as long as the presumptive reattribution does not cause the contributor to exceed any other contribution limit.

The committee is required to notify the contributors in writing of the presumptive reattribution within 60 days of the treasurer's receipt of the contribution, and must offer the contributor the option to receive a refund if it was not intended to be a joint contribution (11 CFR §110.1(k)(3)(ii)(B)(2)-(3)). The committee should retain full-size photocopies of the check or written instrument, of any signed writings that accompanied the contribution, and of the notices sent to the contributors.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 25-27.](#) [PDF]

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### **How do I report a redesignation or reattribution?**

If the original contribution and redesignation/reattribution occurred in the same reporting period, report the contribution as it was originally received. Then, use memo entries to report the information as it has been redesignated and/or reattributed including the date the redesignation and/or reattribution was made.

If the original contribution and redesignation/reattribution occurred in different reporting periods, use a memo entry to report the information as it was originally reported. Then, use additional memo entries to disclose the information as it has been redesignated and/or reattributed including the date the redesignation and/or reattribution was made.

For more information, please consult:

[Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 92-94.](#) [PDF]

[Instructional video on redesignations and reattributions](#)

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### **How do I report receipt of refunds of contributions made by the committee?**

Refunds received by a committee for contributions it made to other political committees or candidates should be reported on Line 15 of Form 3 or Line 21 of Form 3P and itemized on a supporting Schedule A if they aggregate over

\$200 in an election cycle.

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## Reporting on Schedule B - Disbursement Schedule

### What constitutes an adequate or inadequate purpose for a disbursement? Is there a list to help me?

When itemizing disbursements on Schedule B, the itemization should include a brief but specific description of why the disbursement was made. The intent is that any member of the public can look at the purpose and easily understand the meaning. For that reason, vague terms like "consulting," "professional services" and "materials" are not sufficient.

A non-exhaustive list of purposes that the Commission deems inadequate can be found [here](#). See also the Federal Register Notice: [Commission's Statement of Policy on Purpose of Disbursement](#). A non-exhaustive list of acceptable purposes can be found [here](#).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, page 103](#). [PDF]

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### How do I report reimbursements made to the candidate and campaign staff when they advanced funds for travel and non-travel items?

The correct format for reporting these transactions depends on various factors. There are different rules for travel advances/reimbursements and non-travel advances/ reimbursements. Other factors include the timing of the advance and reimbursement, the amount of the advance, and any prior contributions made by the candidate and applicable campaign staff.

Please note the differences between travel advances and non-travel advances:

For travel advances, individuals (including the candidate, a paid staff member or a volunteer) can voluntarily spend up to \$1,000 for their own unreimbursed transportation expenses on behalf of the campaign without making a contribution.

Payments for travel expenses exceeding \$1,000 (per candidate, per election) are considered in-kind contributions unless they are reimbursed within the following time periods: (1) if the individual paid with cash or a personal check, within 30 days from the date the expense was incurred; or (2) if the individual paid with a credit card, within 60 days of the closing date on the credit card billing statement (11 CFR §116.5(b), [FEC Advisory Opinion 1992-01](#)).

Non-travel advances are considered in-kind contributions until they are repaid by the committee ([FEC Advisory Opinion 1992-01](#)).

The Campaign Guide details possible scenarios and reporting instructions. If you are reporting advances and reimbursements, RAD recommends you consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 98-101](#). [PDF]

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## How do I report credit card payments or reimbursements to individuals?

### Credit card payments:

Schedule B, Line 17 (Operating Expenditures): The payment to the credit card company should be disclosed on Line 17 and MEMO entries to identify the original vendor(s) are required if payments to the vendor(s) exceed \$200 during the election cycle. (11 CFR §104.9(a) and (b))

If there are multiple credit card payments on a report, you should clearly identify to which payment each memo entry relates.

### Reimbursements to individuals for TRAVEL/SUBSISTENCE expenses:

Schedule B, Line 17: The reimbursement to the individual should be disclosed on Line 17 and the purpose should indicate that it is for travel/subsistence reimbursement. If the travel/subsistence reimbursement is greater than \$500, MEMO entries to identify the original vendor(s) are required if payments to the vendor(s) exceed \$200 during the election cycle. (11 CFR §104.9(a) and (b); Advisory Opinions 1992-1 and 1996-20, footnote 3)

If there are multiple reimbursements on a report, you should clearly identify to which reimbursement each memo entry relates.

### Reimbursements to individuals for NON-TRAVEL expenses:

Schedule B, Line 17: The reimbursement to the individual should be disclosed on Line 17 and MEMO entries to identify the original vendor(s) are required if payments to the vendor(s) exceed \$200 during the election cycle. (11 CFR §104.9(a) and (b); Advisory Opinions 1992-1 and 1996-20, footnote 3)

If there are multiple reimbursements on a report, you should clearly identify to which reimbursement each memo entry relates.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 98-101, 105](#). [PDF]

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## How do we report disbursements to a payroll company for employees' salary?

The payment to the payroll company should be disclosed on Line 17 and MEMO entries to identify the ultimate recipients of the salary payments are required if the payments exceed \$200 during the election cycle. (11 CFR §104.9)

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## How do I report voided checks and un-cashed refunds? What should I do with these funds?

To report a voided payment to a vendor (reported in a prior period on Line 17 of Form 3 or Line 23 of Form 3P), itemize a negative payment to the same vendor on Schedule B of the report covering the period when you voided the check. Include all relevant information (date voided, amount, address, city, state, zip code), and enter "voided check" in the purpose field. Using memo text or an additional text field, indicate the date of the original disbursement and clarify if the check was reissued.

To report an un-cashed refund (reported in a prior period on Line 20(a), (b) or (c)) of Form 3 or Line 28(a), (b), or (c) of Form 3P), report a negative transaction on the same line on which the original refund was reported. In the purpose field, enter "un-cashed refund." Using memo text or an additional text field, indicate the date of the original disbursement and clarify if the check was reissued.

If the checks are not re-issued, both un-cashed refunds and voided checks may result in the receipt of excessive or prohibited contributions. In these cases, the funds must be disgorged to the U.S. Department of the Treasury's General Fund Account. The excessive/prohibited amount should be sent to: U.S. Department of the Treasury, Financial Management Services, Credit Accounting Branch, 3700 East-West Highway, Hyattsville, MD 20782. You should include a cover letter that explains that the funds are potential violations of the Federal Election Campaign Act and request that the funds be placed in the "general fund account."

The disgorgement to the Treasury should be itemized on Schedule B supporting Line 21 of Form 3 or Line 29 of Form 3P with a purpose which explains why the funds are being disgorged. Use memo text or an additional text field, if necessary. In addition, you must itemize as a memo entry the original transactions making up the disgorgement.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 33-34](#) [PDF] and FEC Advisory Opinions [1991-39](#), [1995-19](#), [2003-18](#)

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#### **My committee is contributing to another federal candidate committee. What information is required?**

Contributions to other federal candidate committees should be reported on Schedule B supporting Line 21 of Form 3 or Line 29 of Form 3P. In addition to the regular itemization information (recipient committee's full name, complete address, date, amount and purpose), you must also include the recipient candidate's name, the election designation, and the office sought (House, Senate or President) including the state and Congressional district, if applicable (11 CFR §104.3(b)(3)(v)).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, page 104](#). [PDF]

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#### **How do I report out-of-pocket expenditures (in-kind contributions) from the candidate?**

If a candidate uses his/her personal funds to make expenditures on behalf of the committee without intending to be reimbursed, this constitutes an in-kind contribution from the candidate to the committee. In addition to reporting it on Schedule A if it exceeds the \$200 itemization threshold for the election cycle, the committee must also itemize it on Schedule B for Operating Expenditures. In addition, out-of-pocket spending by candidates, as agents of their authorized committees, requires memo entry itemization of the ultimate vendor if the aggregate amount of payments to that vendor exceeds \$200 for the election cycle. The memo entry must include the date, amount, and purpose of the out-of-pocket payments, as well as the name and address of the vendor to which payment was made.

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#### **Reporting on Schedules C & D - Loans and Debts Schedules**

##### **How do I report a loan from the candidate's personal funds?**

Report the initial receipt of the loan from the candidate on Schedule A supporting Line 13(a) of Form 3 or Line 19(a) of Form 3P, regardless of the amount of the loan 11 CFR §104.3(a)(4)(iv)). The loan must also be reported continuously on Schedule C until it is repaid in full. Make sure to include all loan terms on Schedule C. If there is no due date or interest rate, you can enter "none" or "n/a," but you cannot leave these fields blank. Be sure to include the term "personal funds" on either Schedule A or C. Any loan payments must be reported on Schedule B supporting Line 19(a) of Form 3 or Line 27 of Form 3P and on Schedule C (11 CFR §104.3(b)(4)(iii)). Any interest payments must be reported as an operating expenditure and require itemization on a Schedule B supporting Line 17 of Form 3 or Line 23 of Form 3P once payments to the candidate exceed \$200 in the election cycle.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 28-30, 91, 108](#) [PDF] as well as [FEC Form 3 Instructions](#) and [FEC Form 3P Instructions](#).

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**The candidate obtained a bank loan and/or loan of money from an advance on a brokerage account, credit card, home equity line of credit or other line of credit and loaned that money to the campaign. How do I report it?**

Report the receipt of the loan on Schedule A supporting Line 13(a) of Form 3 or Line 19(a) of Form 3P, regardless of the amount. List the candidate as the loan source and note what kind of loan it is. The loan must also be reported continuously on Schedule C until it is repaid in full. Only the candidate needs to be listed as the source of the loan on Schedule C. The type of loan the candidate receives must also be disclosed in either the first box for endorsers and guarantors with a notation for loan type or in the box for "Loan Source" after the candidate's name. Schedule C should disclose the loan terms between the candidate and the committee. Make sure to include all loan terms on Schedule C. If there is no due date or interest rate, you can enter "none" or "n/a," but you cannot leave these fields blank.

The committee must also file a Schedule C-1 to disclose the terms between the candidate and the bank. For electronic filers, the Schedule C-1 can be filed electronically. For this type of loan, neither the treasurer's signature nor lender certification is required. A copy of the loan agreement is not necessary.

The committee can either repay the candidate or the bank for this type of loan. The repayments must be itemized on Schedule B supporting Line 19(a) of Form 3 or Line 27(a) of Form 3P for a candidate repayment, or Line 19(b) of Form 3 or Line 27(b) of Form 3P for a bank repayment. When repayments are made to the candidate, the committee is not required to report the repayments made by the candidate to the lending institution (11 CFR §104.3(a)(3)(vii)(B) and (b)(2)(iii)(A)).

Any interest payments must be reported as an operating expenditure and require itemization on a Schedule B supporting Line 17 of Form 3 or Line 23 of Form 3P once payments to the candidate exceed \$200 in the election cycle.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 28-30, 91, 108-112](#) [PDF] as well as [FEC Form 3 Instructions](#) and [FEC Form 3P Instructions](#).

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**When should I disclose a debt owed by the committee? What if I do not know the exact amount of a debt?**

A debt of \$500 or less is reportable once it has been outstanding 60 days from the date incurred (the date of the transaction, not the date the bill is received). The debt must be disclosed on the next regularly scheduled report. A debt exceeding \$500 must be disclosed in the report covering the date on which the debt was incurred. Debts must be reported on Schedule D until they are repaid in full (11 CFR §104.3(d) and 104.11). If the exact amount of a debt is not known, the committee may report an estimated amount, provided they note that the figure is an estimate. The committee must either amend the report (and all subsequent reports) to indicate the correct amount, once a correct figure is known, or include the correct figure, along with an explanation of the change, in the report for the reporting period during which the amount is determined.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 105-107](#). [PDF]

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### **Can I discontinue reporting unpayable debts?**

A committee with unpayable debts (e.g., debts owed to defunct entities) that wants to discontinue reporting them should call their campaign finance analyst in the Reports Analysis Division ([RAD](#)) for assistance. RAD typically advises committees to file a statement on Form 99 (Miscellaneous Text Statement) that includes a request to discontinue reporting the debt and an explanation of why the debt is unpayable and what efforts the committee has made to contact the vendor, including the timeline and any supporting details. Terminating committees filing a Debt Settlement Plan (FEC Form 8) should include the debt on the Form 8 and explain the circumstances in the appropriate section(s). Committees are advised to continue reporting the debt until they have verified with RAD that a debt may be taken off future reports.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, page 107, 125-127](#). [PDF]

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## **Reporting on Form 6 - 48 Hour Notices**

### **What are 48-Hour Notices and when do I need to file them?**

48-Hour Notices are reports of "last minute" contributions and/or loans of \$1,000 or more received less than 20 days but more than 48 hours before the day of any election in which the candidate is running. The 48-Hour Notice must be filed within 48 hours of the campaign's receipt of the contribution/loan.

House and Presidential committees file these notices with the FEC. Committees that file electronically must file 48-Hour Notices in an electronic format. A paper-filing committee may also file online using the [FEC's web-based forms](#). Paper-filing committees that choose to file using the paper version of FEC Form 6 must fax the notice to the FEC at 202-219-0174.

Senate committees must file these notices with the Secretary of the Senate using a paper version of the FEC Form 6 or may use their own stationery for the notice, provided that it contains the candidate's name and the office sought, the identification of the contributor, and the amount and date of receipt of the contribution. Senate committees must fax the notice to the Senate at 202-224-1851. Committees should keep fax receipts of all transmissions.

In addition to filing the 48-Hour Notices, committees must itemize all last-minute contributions in their next scheduled report (11 CFR §104.5(f)).



For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 81-82\[PDF\]](#) as well as the [Form 6](#) and [Form 6 Instructions](#).

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### **How do I report a 48-Hour Notice for a partnership contribution?**

If a partnership gives a contribution of \$1,000 or more to your committee during the 48-Hour Notice period, the committee should file a notice for the partnership. There is no need to report the individual attribution on the 48-Hour Notice.

### **The committee missed the 48 hour requirement for filing 48-Hour Notices. Should I file the notices late?**

48-Hour Notices must be filed within 48 hours of a contribution's receipt. Should you miss this deadline, RAD still recommends that you file the notice, provided it is before the date of the applicable election.

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## **Reporting Bitcoins**

### **Can my committee purchase bitcoins as an investment?**

Yes. In [Advisory Opinion 2014-02](#), the Commission concluded that a committee can purchase bitcoins with funds from its campaign depository for investment purposes. The bitcoins do not need to be deposited in a campaign depository within 10 days of receipt. Bitcoins may be received into and held in a bitcoin wallet until the committee liquidates them.

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### **How do I report bitcoins purchased as an investment?**

When the committee sells any bitcoins purchased from funds transferred from a campaign depository, the committee must report any earnings or losses as an "other receipt" (Line 15 for Form 3 filers; Line 21 for Form 3P filers; Line 17 for Form 3X filers). Losses should be reported as a negative entry.

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### **Can I use bitcoins that the campaign buys as an investment to purchase goods or services?**

No, committees cannot use bitcoins to purchase goods or services. The committee must sell the bitcoins and deposit the proceeds into the campaign depository before using the funds to make disbursements for goods and services.

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### **Can my committee receive bitcoins as contributions?**

Yes, a committee can receive bitcoins as contributions. The Act defines a "contribution" to include "any gift, subscription, loan, advance, or deposit of money or anything of value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office." In Advisory Opinion 2014-02, the Commission concluded that bitcoins are "money or anything of value" within the meaning of the Act.

Bitcoins may be received into and held in a bitcoin wallet until the committee liquidates them. Holding bitcoins in a bitcoin wallet does not relieve the committee of its obligations to return or refund a bitcoin contribution that is from a prohibited source, exceeds the contributor's contribution limit, or is otherwise not legal.

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### **How do I determine the value of the bitcoins that I receive as a contribution?**

A political committee that receives a contribution in bitcoins should value that contribution based on the market value of bitcoins at the time the contribution is received.

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### **How do I report receiving contributions in bitcoins?**

The initial receipt of bitcoins as contributions should be reported like in-kind contributions. The committee will disclose the receipt of the contribution and also report the bitcoins as a disbursement. These offsetting entries allow the committee's reported cash-on-hand to remain unchanged while holding the bitcoins outside of a campaign depository. It is recommended to include the number of bitcoins that the committee received and that the bitcoins were not liquidated. Please see Advisory Opinion 2014-02, [Attachment 1](#) for an example of how to report receiving bitcoins as contributions.

Any usual and nominal fees that the processor charges should not be deducted from the reported value of the contribution. The committee should report the usual and nominal fees and commissions that it pays to an online processor as an operating expenditure.

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### **How do I report liquidating bitcoins?**

Reporting for liquidating bitcoins depends on whether the committee sells to a known purchaser or to an unknown purchaser.

#### **Selling to a known purchaser**

If the committee sells the bitcoins directly to a purchaser, and therefore knows the identity of the purchaser, the purchaser is considered to have made a contribution to the committee. The committee will report the purchaser's name, address, and employer/occupation information as well as the date of the purchase, the value of the bitcoins

purchased, and the number of bitcoins purchased as a receipt on the committee's report. The committee will also report a memo entry disclosing the original contributor's information, date of contribution, original value of the bitcoins, and the number of bitcoins originally given to the committee. Please see Advisory Opinion 2014-02, [Attachment 2\(a\)](#) for an example of how to report selling bitcoins to a known purchaser.

### **Selling to an unknown purchaser**

If the committee sells the bitcoins through an established market mechanism where the purchaser is not known, the purchaser is not considered to have made a contribution to the committee. The committee will report the market or exchange's name, and address information, as well as the date of the purchase and the value of the bitcoins purchased. The committee should also include a notation stating how many bitcoins were purchased and that the purchaser is unknown. The committee will also report a memo entry disclosing the original contributor's information, date of contribution, original value of the bitcoins, and the number of bitcoins originally given to the committee. Please see Advisory Opinion 2014-02, [Attachment 2\(b\)](#) for an example of how to report selling bitcoins to a unknown purchaser.

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## **Reporting Requirement for "Bundled" Contributions**

### **What are the additional disclosure requirements for "bundled" contributions earmarked through a conduit?**

A committee must file Form 3L to disclose information about each Lobbyist/Registrant or Lobbyist/Registrant PAC that forwards, or is credited with raising, two or more bundled contributions aggregating in excess of \$17,900 (indexed for inflation) during a specific "covered" period (11 CFR §104.22(b)(1)). Bundled contributions include contributions collected and forwarded by a Lobbyist/Registrant or Lobbyist/Registrant PAC either physically or electronically, as well as contributions for which the Lobbyist/Registrant or Lobbyist/Registrant PAC receives credit from the recipient authorized committee. Form 3L is only required if \$17,900 threshold is met in a given covered period. Committees should file 3L on the same filing schedule as its current Form 3 or 3P schedule (quarterly or monthly).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, Appendix F\[PDF\]](#) as well as the [Form 3L](#) and [FEC Form 3L Instructions](#).

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### **What are "covered" periods for Form 3L?**

#### *Monthly Filers:*

-Semi-Annual Periods

January 1 – June 30

July 1 – December 31; AND

-Monthly Periods

Monthly reports filed the 20th of each month (except Year End which is filed on the 31st)

#### *Quarterly Filers:*

Semi-Annual Periods

January 1 – June 30

July 1 – December 31; AND

Calendar quarters ending 3/31, 6/30, 9/30, and 12/31; AND

Applicable pre- and post- election reporting periods during the election year

11 CFR §104.22(a)(5)

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, Appendix F\[PDF\]](#) and the [FEC Form 3L Instructions](#).

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### What information is disclosed on Form 3L?

*Schedule A:* Is used to disclose reportable contributions bundles by lobbyist/registrants and lobbyist/registrant PACs.

- Name of lobbyist/registrant or lobbyist/registrant PAC
- Address of lobbyist/registrant or lobbyist/registrant PAC
- Aggregate amount of bundled contributions received during the covered period

*Schedule B:* Is only used to disclose bundled contributions that are deposited, reported, and later refunded.

- Name of lobbyist/registrant or lobbyist/registrant PAC
- Address of lobbyist/registrant or lobbyist/registrant PAC
- Aggregate amount of refunds made during covered period

(11 CFR §104.22(b)(1))

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, Appendix F\[PDF\]](#) of the and the [FEC Form 3L Instructions](#).

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### Reporting Recount-Related Receipts and Disbursements

#### How do I establish a recount fund and report recount donations?

A campaign may establish a recount fund either as a separate bank account of the candidate's authorized committee or as a separate entity. In either case, the receipts and disbursements for recount expenses must be reported on the authorized committee's reports as "Other Receipts" and "Other Disbursements."

A campaign must include amounts received for a recount in its total for "Other Receipts," recorded on Line 15 of Form 3 or Line 21 of Form 3P. The committee must itemize the donation on Schedule A for Line 15 of Form 3 or Line 21 of Form 3P if the aggregate receipts from that donor exceed \$200 for the election cycle.

For more information, please consult the FEC Advisory Opinion [2006-24](#) and [Reporting Recount Related Disbursements](#)

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## How do I report recount disbursements?

A campaign must include amounts spent on a recount in its total for "Other Disbursements," recorded on Line 21 of Form 3 or Line 29 of Form 3P. The committee must itemize the disbursements on Schedule B for Line 21 of Form 3 or Line 29 of Form 3P if payments to the same payee aggregate more than \$200 for the election cycle.

For more information, please consult the FEC Advisory Opinion [2006-24](#) and [Reporting Recount Related Disbursements](#)

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## Post-Election Reporting

### Now that the election is over, are there any special rules on repaying personal loans from the candidate?

There are special rules concerning the repayment of personal loans from the candidate (including advances or candidate endorsed bank loans) that aggregate more than \$250,000. The following rules apply:

The committee may use contributions to repay the candidate for the entire amount of the loan or loans only if those contributions were made on or before the day of the election; and

The committee may use contributions to repay the candidate only up to \$250,000 from contributions made after the date of the election.

If the committee uses the amount of cash-on-hand as of the date of the election to repay the candidate for loans in excess of \$250,000, then it must do so within 20 days of the election. During that time, the committee must treat the portion of candidate loans that exceed \$250,000, minus the amount of cash-on-hand as of the day after the election as a contribution by the candidate (11 CFR §116.11(c), FEC Advisory Opinion [2003-30](#)).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 28-30](#). [PDF]

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### Can I collect contributions even though the election is over to help retire our campaign debts?

If the committee has net debts outstanding for an election, the committee may be able to continue raising money to retire that debt (11 CFR §110.1(b)(3)). A campaign's net debts outstanding consist of unpaid debts incurred with respect to the particular election minus the cash on hand plus the total amounts owed to the campaign in the form of credits, refunds of deposits, returns and receivables or a commercially reasonable estimate of the collectible amount, and personal loans from the candidate exceeding \$250,000. For the purpose of calculating net debts outstanding for a primary election, cash on hand need not include contributions designated for the general election.

A campaign first calculates its net debts outstanding as of the day of the election. Thereafter, the campaign continually recalculates its total net debts outstanding as additional funds are received for, or spent on, the election for which the debt remains.

If the committee is accepting contributions for debt retirement, make sure to disclose the contribution as "debt retirement" on the report and include the applicable election. Please be advised that debt retirement contributions are subject to the contribution limits for that particular election (i.e. if a contributor already gave \$2,600 for the 2014 General Election, they cannot contribute towards 2014 General Debt Retirement). The contribution limit does not change over time (i.e. the 2015-2016 limit for individuals is \$2,700, but if you are accepting funds to pay debts for the 2014 cycle, the contribution limit for an individual for the 2014 Primary or General Debt Retirement is \$2,600).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 27-28.](#) [PDF]

For an illustration of how the net debts outstanding calculation is performed, see the [Explanation and Justification, 52 Fed. Reg. 762](#) (January 9, 1987)

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### **The committee accepted contributions for the general election, but the candidate lost in the primary election. What should I do with the general election contributions?**

A candidate is entitled to an election limit only if he or she seeks office in that election. Thus, a candidate who loses the primary (or otherwise does not participate in the general election) does not have a separate limit for the general. If a candidate accepts contributions for the general election before the primary is held and loses the primary (or does not otherwise participate in the general election), the candidate's principal campaign committee must refund, redesignate or reattribute the general election contributions within 60 days of the primary or the date that the candidate publicly withdraws from the primary race (11 CFR §110.1(b)(3) and 110.2(b)(5)).

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 20-21.](#) [PDF]

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### **How does the candidate forgive a personal loan?**

If the candidate is forgiving a loan, the candidate must write a letter, preferably on campaign letterhead, addressed to the FEC stating that he/she forgives the loan (Senate committees must send this letter to the Secretary of the Senate). The candidate's original signature must be on this letter. If you file electronically, contact your software provider for help in disclosing loan forgiveness on the report. If you are a paper filer, reduce the loan amount manually on the report.

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### **I want to terminate my committee. How do I end my filing requirement?**

The committee may file a termination report at any time, provided that:

The committee no longer intends to receive contributions, make expenditures or make any disbursements that would otherwise qualify it as a political committee; and

Neither the committee seeking to terminate nor any other authorized committee of the same candidate has any outstanding debts or obligations (11 CFR §102.3 and 116.1).

The termination report must also disclose the purposes for which any remaining funds or assets will be used.

Please note that a committee involved in an FEC enforcement action, an FEC audit or litigation with the FEC must continue to file regularly scheduled reports until the matter is resolved.

After the Commission reviews your termination report, a letter will be sent to the treasurer informing him/her of the committee's status. Do not assume your filing requirement is over until you receive a letter from the Commission stating that the committee has been terminated. Until you receive such a letter, the Committee must continue to file reports.

For more information, please consult [Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees, pages 123-127](#). [PDF]

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