

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

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HOUSE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE TASK FORCE HEARS TESTIMONY ON FEC FY 1985 BUDGET REQUEST

WASHINGTON -- "Our budget request reflects the Commission's best judgment for fiscally responsible, full performance funding that will greatly enhance our ability to fulfill our statutory mandate", Federal Election Commissioner John Warren McGarry told a House of Representatives oversight committee hearing this afternoon.

Testifying before the Task Force on Elections of the Committee on House Administration, McGarry, who is Chairman of the FEC Finance Committee, said the \$13,648,000 budget request for fiscal year 1985 is the result of "The volatile growth in campaign spending over which we have no control, and which places an ever-increasing burden on our limited resources."

Joining Commissioner McGarry in testifying were Commissioner Joan D. Aikens, vice chairman of the Finance Committee, Chairman Lee Ann Elliott, Staff Director John Surina and General Counsel Charles Steele.

Addressing the difference between the Commission's request and the Administration's budget proposal, Commissioner McGarry said the latter "is inconsistent with the Federal Election need for alternative quarters as well as our unique responsibilities in 1984 and 1985 resulting from the Presidential election."

Some \$1.1 million of the FEC request represents special one-time only costs related to relocating the Commission in more efficient and safer facilities.

The Commission's proposed relocation is based on a facilities efficiency and safety study conducted for the General Services Administration by a consultant. The study, which has been made available to Congressional Committees, "substantiates numerous safety hazards both to employees and to the increasing

(more)

numbers of people who utilize our facilities," he said. Deferral of fundamental maintenance and intensive use by the public and staff have made the present physical plant inefficient and unsafe, and the cost of renovating the FEC's present building to meet standards would be more expensive than relocating the agency.

Areas cited in the testimony as requiring adequate funding include renewal of the Commission's computer contract, which Commissioner McGarry said, "in the light of the explosion in the amount of information with which we must deal, it is essential that we obtain the most current and efficient technology available;"

- * Restoration of activities which previously were reduced or discontinued because of budgetary cuts and limitations. This includes entering into the data base identity of all individuals who contribute over \$200 in a year to candidate and political committees -- a disclosure activity which had been sharply curtailed;

- * Rebuilding audit capability which was reduced in 1982 by a reduction-in-force and only partially restored in 1983;

- * Add positions in the General Counsel's Office, in part to respond to increased legal work generated by the growth in the number of political committees filing reports and the number of transactions reported.

- * "Our disclosure program accurately informs the public of the sources and uses of campaign funds, and our compliance program reinforces the disclosure requirements and seeks to remedy violations of the law," Commissioner McGarry said.

- * Almost as important as the material benefit to the electoral process which flows from our efforts is the contribution made by a credible Federal Election Commission to enhancing the general public's faith in the integrity of the American political system."

Both the Congress and courts have cited this point as a significant rationale for an effective and visible Federal Election Commission, he said.