

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION



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FOR RELEASE:
JUNE 2, 1986

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FEC RATIFIES NEW COMPUTER CONTRACT

WASHINGTON--Greatly enhanced data processing capabilities and substantial savings will result from an agreement between the Federal Election Commission and Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC). The FEC just recently approved the new six-year contract.

The Commission will be able to take advantage of numerous technological improvements which have occurred in the computer industry over the past few years. The speed at which the agency's computers access information will increase significantly, allowing the FEC to handle many more requests, from both the press and public, on an overnight basis. The number of terminals stationed at Commission headquarters will also rise.

Since the DEC system offers additional information storage (nearly three times as much as the current system), data bases from prior years will eventually be restored. As of March 1, 1986, the Commission has been able to offer on-line access to computerized data only for the '84 and '86 election cycles due to cuts resulting from the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Deficit Reduction Act.

While the level of service will rise, the cost to the FEC will decline. The Commission will, in fact, pay less under this new agreement than it does under its current contract. After discounting conversion expenses, the DEC system will cost the agency approximately \$3.1 million over six years, or \$42,753 a month. The FEC's current contract runs about \$50,000 a month. The agency plans to convert to the DEC system by October. When that happens, participants in the Commission's Direct Access Program will see the access charge drop from \$50 per hour to about \$22 per hour.

The FEC expects the transition this fall to be smooth and foresees no interruption of computer services to the public.

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