

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

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FEC ASKS FOR SLIGHT BUDGET BOOST IN FY94 TO HANDLE ESCALATING WORKLOADS

WASHINGTON -- Members of the Federal Election Commission told a Congressional committee Tuesday that a \$2.6 million budget increase is needed for fiscal 1994 if the agency is to adequately enforce laws and continue to provide meaningful and timely public disclosure.

FEC Vice Chairman Trevor Potter testified before a U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee that the Commission requests a fiscal 1994 budget of \$23.6 million with 320 full-time employees.

"It is the unanimous view of the Commission that these resources are urgently required, and that they are the bare minimum needed for the acceptable functioning of the FEC given its current responsibilities," said Potter, who appeared with Commission Chairman Scott Thomas and Commissioner Danny Lee McDonald.

"There is no point in maintaining campaign finance laws on the books, or in adding to them; if they cannot be administered and enforced in a timely manner," said Potter, who noted that campaign finance reform is near the top of the national agenda. "The very existence of a credible enforcement and disclosure process is at stake."

In explaining the need for additional resources, members of the Congressional committee were told the FEC had to monitor almost \$2 billion in federal campaign finance activity in the 1992 cycle based on the activities of more than 7,100 political committees nationwide. Additionally, the FEC's enforcement program has been deluged as cases have become more complex and the number of respondents has more than tripled to 2,432 in four years.

Potter said that the Commission had undertaken several "belt-tightening" actions in the past year including rigorous retraining of employees and prioritizing enforcement and audit investigations.

The FEC's current budget woes would be compounded with the passage of any new election-related laws, such as the Motor Voter Bill or a new campaign finance statute, Potter said.

Even without new laws to administer and enforce, Commission projections forecast an extremely heavy workload for the 1994 election cycle:

- ** Dramatic increases in pending enforcement investigations. (At present, many of the enforcement attorneys have more than 20 ongoing cases each.)
- ** More than 1,000,000 transactions from 75,000 documents will be reviewed and publicly released by the FEC.
- ** Candidates, committees, the press and public will make more than 200,000 requests for information or other assistance.
- ** The FEC will have to review the election activities of more than 7,100 candidates, political parties and political action committees nationwide.

Created in 1975, the FEC is the country's first and only independent executive agency responsible for administering and enforcing federal election laws. The Commission has exclusive jurisdiction over the financing of campaigns for the Presidency, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House. Primary responsibilities of the FEC include providing public disclosure of campaign finance records, enforcing restrictions on election contributions and expenditures, and administering public financing of Presidential campaigns.

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