

Illinois
Campaign
Financing
Act

Contribution Limits



STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS
CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE DIVISION

Contribution limits for Illinois political committees went into effect on January 1, 2011. There are different contribution limits for different types of committees, and each limit refers to contributions received during a particular election cycle. It is therefore necessary to first explain the different kinds of election cycles for political committees.

ELECTION CYCLES:

For Political Party Committees, Political Action Committees, Independent Expenditure Committees and Ballot Initiative Committees, an election cycle is a calendar year (beginning January 1 and ending on December 31 of each calendar year.) However, for Candidate Political Committees, the election cycle depends on what office is being sought by the candidate supported by the committee. For each of four different candidate designations, there are two possible election cycles:

Candidate Political Committee election cycles:

For a committee supporting a candidate to be elected at a General Primary Election or General Election, the election cycle is either:

- 1) January 1 (following the General Election for the office sought) through the date of the General Primary Election (for the office sought), or
- 2) the day after the General Primary Election (for the office sought) through December 31 (following the General Election.)

For a committee supporting a candidate to be elected at a Consolidated Primary Election or Consolidated Election, the election cycle is either:

- 1) July 1 (following the Consolidated Election for the office sought) through the date of the Consolidated Primary Election (for the office sought), or
- 2) the day after the Consolidated Primary Election (for the office sought) through June 30 (following the Consolidated Election.)

For a committee supporting a candidate for the General Assembly, the election cycle is either:

- 1) January 1 (following a General Election) through the date of the next General Primary Election, or
- 2) the day after a General Primary Election through December 31 (following a General Election.)

For a committee supporting a candidate for a (judicial) retention election, the election cycle is either:

- 1) January 1 (following the General Election when the candidate was elected) through the date the candidate files a declaration of intent to seek retention, or
- 2) the day after the candidate files a declaration of intent to seek retention through December 31 (following the retention election.)

CONTRIBUTION LIMITS:

Contribution limits vary, depending on the type of political committee receiving the contribution. Limits are per election cycle, include an aggregate of contributions from the same source and refer to the maximum amount a committee can receive from a particular type of contributor. The contribution limits are as follows:

Candidate Political Committee:

\$5,800	from an individual (excluding immediate family members)
\$11,600	from a corporation, labor organization or association
\$57,800	from a Candidate Political Committee or Political Action Committee
Unlimited	from a Political Party Committee during a General or Consolidated Election cycle
Unlimited	from a Political Party Committee during a Primary Election cycle in which the candidate does not seek nomination at a Primary Election

During a Primary Election cycle in which the candidate seeks nomination at a Primary Election, the limits from a Political Party Committee are:

\$231,600	to a candidate for statewide constitutional office
\$144,800	to a candidate for the Illinois Senate, Supreme Court or Appellate Court in Cook County, or county-wide offices in Cook County
\$86,900	to a candidate for the Illinois House, Supreme Court or Appellate Court outside Cook County, local offices within Cook County, or county-wide offices outside Cook County
\$57,800	to any other candidate

A candidate for the General Assembly may only accept contributions from one Legislative Caucus Committee.

Contributions to a Candidate Political Committee from a Ballot Initiative Committee or Independent Expenditure Committee are prohibited at any time.

Self-funding Candidates: A candidate/public official or their immediate family members (spouse, parent or child) can make unlimited contributions to that public official or candidate's political committee. However, under certain circumstances, such a public official or candidate may be considered a "self-funding candidate". Reaching this designation causes the contribution limits for all candidates (including the self-funding candidate) for the same office to be waived, allowing those candidates to receive unlimited contributions.

A candidate or public official is considered "self-funding" if, during the 12 months prior to an election, the candidate or public official or their immediate family contributes, loans, or makes independent expenditures in support of or opposition to the candidate, in aggregate, totaling more than \$250,000 (for statewide offices)

or \$100,000 (for all other elective offices) to the candidate or public official's political committee or to other political committees that transfer funds to the candidate's committee. Once the threshold is passed, the candidate or public official must file a Notification of Self-funding with the State Board of Elections within one day. This notification details each contribution or loan made by the candidate or public official or their immediate family. The Board will then post the notification on its website and give official notice to each candidate for the office in question, removing the normal contribution limits for those candidates. If the notification is filed during a primary election cycle and the candidate who filed it is nominated at that primary election, the removal of contribution limits carries over through the general or consolidated election cycle.

Similarly, if an individual or an Independent Expenditure Committee makes independent expenditures supporting or opposing a particular candidate during an election cycle that total more than \$250,000 (for statewide offices) or \$100,000 (for all other elective offices), the individual or Independent Expenditure Committee must file a written disclosure of that fact with the State Board of Elections within 2 business days. The Board will then post the notification on its website and give official notice to each candidate for the office in question, removing the normal contribution limits for those candidates. Contribution limits may also be removed if the Board discovers that an aggregate of independent expenditures by individuals or Independent Expenditure Committees exceed the levels listed above. A similar notification will be posted on the Board's website in such cases, and all affected candidates will be notified.

Political Action Committee:

\$11,600	from an individual*
\$23,200	from a corporation, labor organization, association or Political Party Committee
\$57,800	from a Political Action Committee or Candidate Political Committee

Contributions to a Political Action Committee from a Ballot Initiative Committee or Independent Expenditure Committee are prohibited at any time.

*A corporation, labor organization, association or a Political Action Committee established by one of those three is allowed to act as a conduit to gather and deliver contributions (to a PAC) made through dues, levies or similar assessments. The group acting as the conduit must maintain a list of all the people or groups that paid the dues, levies or similar assessments. For reporting purposes, the Political Action Committee receiving the contributions can report the contributions as an aggregate total from the group or PAC, except that such contributions that exceed \$500 in a reporting period cannot be reported in the aggregate and must be itemized instead, and provided that none of the contributions making up the total exceeds the normal contribution limits.

Political Party Committee:

\$11,600	from an individual
\$23,200	from a corporation, labor organization or association
\$57,800	from a Political Action Committee
Unlimited	from a Candidate Political Committee or Political Party Committee.
Unlimited	from an affiliated federal political committee established under the Federal Election Code by the same political party

Contributions to a Political Party Committee from a Ballot Initiative Committee or Independent Expenditure Committee are prohibited at any time.

Contributions to a Legislative Caucus Committee from another Legislative Caucus Committee are prohibited at any time.

Ballot Initiative Committee:

Unlimited from any source at any time.

Ballot Initiative Committees are unable to make contributions to any other type of political committee.

Independent Expenditure Committee:

Unlimited from any source at any time.

Independent Expenditure Committees are unable to make contributions to any other type of political committee, except for another Independent Expenditure Committee or a Ballot Initiative Committee.

OTHER INFORMATION:

If a Political Committee receives a contribution in violation of the contribution limits, it must either return the contribution to the contributor or donate it to a charity. Failure to do this within 30 days after the Board sends notification to the political committee of the excess contribution causes the contribution to be forfeited to the State of Illinois and subjects the committee to a penalty of up to 150% of the amount of the contribution exceeding the limit.

Contribution limits for all types of committees will be adjusted for inflation by the State Board of Elections in odd-numbered years. Adjusted limits will be posted on the Board's website, at www.elections.il.gov.

This brochure is not a complete or fully detailed digest, but an overview intended to help in understanding basic responsibilities under the law. Some of the language in this brochure is presented in simplified form, and should not be considered a substitute for applicable law.

For more complete and authoritative guidance concerning all areas of campaign financial disclosure, refer to actual statutory language and to the State Board of Elections Rules and Regulations. Consultation with professional legal counsel is also encouraged. Additionally, assistance from the State Board of Elections or other governmental authorities, where jurisdiction exists, is encouraged.

For more information, complete guidelines, and rules and regulations as set forth by the State Board of Elections, write, call, FAX or e-mail the:

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Information including the law, rules and regulations, forms, calendar, and a glossary of terms may be obtained by accessing the State Board of Elections website at www.elections.il.gov.

Issued by the
Illinois State Board of Elections

Printed by authority of the State of Illinois
January 2019