



## FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

### LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS - 1989

On March 9, 1989, the Federal Election Commission adopted 30 legislative recommendations for submission to Congress and the President, in compliance with 2 U.S.C. §438(a)(9). Among these, five recommendations are new this year. They pertain to the following topics:

1. Presidential Election Campaign Fund
2. Contributions and Expenditures to Influence Federal and Non-Federal Elections
3. Nonprofit Corporations
4. Disclaimer Notices
5. Random Audits

In addition, the Commission modified three recommendations that were submitted last year. The modified recommendations concern Monthly Reports, the Commission as the Sole Point of Entry and the Budget Reimbursement Fund. The remaining 22 recommendations were also adopted last year and appear in the 1987 Annual Report.

## Public Financing

### Presidential Election Campaign Fund (1989)

*Section:* 26 U.S.C. §§9001-9013, 9031-9042 and 6096

*Recommendation:* Congress should be alert to the fact that, based on Commission projections, by 1996 the Presidential Election Campaign Fund may lack sufficient money to fully fund all phases of the Presidential elections: primaries, conventions and general election. Congress may wish therefore to modify the overall scheme for financing Presidential elections.

*Explanation:* Under the current rate of taxpayer checkoffs and the current level of demand for federal funds in Presidential elections, there is serious doubt as to whether the Presidential Election Campaign Fund will have sufficient funds to cover all phases of the 1996 Presidential elections. The fund may even be insufficient by 1992.

After expected total disbursements of \$176 million during the 1988 election cycle, the balance in the Fund will be approximately \$50 million. With an estimated \$35 million added by taxpayers each year, the 1992 balance would be a projected \$190 million. This amount might cover the disbursements associated with the 1992 election. After the 1992 election, however, the balance in the Fund will approach zero. If taxpayer checkoffs continue at the current level of \$35 million per year, the balance by 1996 will be approximately \$140 million--some \$35 million less than the amount distributed in 1988.

At 26 U.S.C. §9006 (c), the law provides for a pro rata distribution of monies if the Presidential Election Campaign Fund is insufficient to satisfy the full entitlement of all eligible candidates in the general election. Under 26 U.S.C. §9003(b), major party candidates may accept contributions toward the general election to make up any deficiency resulting from this pro rata distribution. Such a result, however, would clearly alter the Presidential public funding program, which has been in effect in the general elections since 1976.

The law (26 U.S.C. §9037(a)) mandates that the Secretary of the Treasury make funds available for the primary matching program only after he determines that there are sufficient funds available for the conventions and the general election. Consequently, primary candidates would be the first to suffer if a shortage occurred in the Fund.

### Adjustment of Presidential Primary Threshold Submission

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §9033(b)

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider raising the threshold amount of matchable contributions required to qualify for Presidential primary matching funds. To reach this higher threshold, Congress could increase the number of States in which the candidate must raise the qualifying amount of matchable contributions; and/or increase the total amount of qualifying matchable contributions that must be raised in each of the States.

*Explanation:* We have witnessed the fourth publicly financed Presidential election under the Federal Election Commission's authority. The statute provides for a COLA adjustment on the overall primary spending limitation, which has more than doubled since 1976. There is not, however, a corresponding adjustment made to the threshold requirements. Such an adjustment would ensure that funds continue to be given only to candidates who demonstrate broad national support.

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### **Fundraising Limitation for Publicly Financed Presidential Primary Campaigns**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §§431(9)(A)(vi) and 441a

*Recommendation:* The Commission recommends that the separate fundraising limitation provided to publicly financed Presidential primary campaigns be combined with the overall limit. Thus, instead of a candidate's having a \$10 million (plus COLA<sup>1</sup>) limit for campaign expenditures and a \$2 million (plus COLA) limit for fundraising (20 percent of overall limit), each candidate would have one \$12 million (plus COLA) limit for all campaign expenditures.

*Explanation:* Campaigns that have sufficient funds to spend up to the overall limit usually allocate some of their expenditures to the fundraising category. These campaigns come close to spending the maximum permitted under both their overall limit and their special fundraising limit. Hence, by combining the two limits, Congress would not substantially alter spending amounts or patterns. For those campaigns which do not spend up to the overall expenditure limit, the separate fundraising limit is meaningless. Many smaller campaigns do not even bother to use it, except in one or two States where the expenditure limit is low, e.g., Iowa and New Hampshire. Assuming that the State limitations are eliminated or appropriately adjusted, this recommendation would have little impact on the election process.

The advantages of the recommendation, however, are substantial. They include a reduction in accounting burdens and a simplification in reporting requirements for campaigns, and a reduction in the Commission's auditing task.

### **State Expenditure Limits for Publicly Financed Presidential Primary Campaigns**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §441a

*Recommendation:* The Commission recommends that the State-by-State limitations on expenditures for publicly financed Presidential primary candidates be eliminated.

*Explanation:* The Commission has now seen four Presidential elections under the State expenditure limitations. Based on our experience, we believe that the limitations could be removed with no material impact on the process.

Our experience has shown that the limitations have little impact on campaign spending in a given State, with the exception of Iowa and New Hampshire. In most other States, campaigns are unable or do not wish to expend an amount equal to the limitation. In effect, then, the administration of the entire program results in limiting disbursements in these two primaries alone.

If the limitations were removed, the level of disbursements in these States would obviously increase. With an increasing number of primaries vying for a campaign's limited resources, however, it would not be possible to spend very large amounts in these early primaries and still have adequate funds available for the later primaries. Thus, the overall national limit would serve as a constraint on State spending, even in the early primaries. At the same time, candidates would have broader discretion in the running of their campaigns.

Our experience has also shown that the limitations have been only partially successful in limiting expenditures in the early primary States. The use of the fundraising limitation, the

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<sup>1</sup> Spending limits are increased by the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), which the Department of Labor calculates annually.

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compliance cost exemption, the volunteer service provisions, the unreimbursed personnel travel expense provisions, the use of a personal residence in volunteer activity exemption, and a complex series of allocation schemes have developed into an art which when skillfully practiced can partially circumvent the State limitations.

Finally, the allocation of expenditures to the States has proven a significant accounting burden for campaigns and an equally difficult audit and enforcement task for the Commission.

Given our experience to date, we believe that this change to the Act would be of substantial benefit to all parties concerned.

### **Deposit of Repayments**

*Section:* 26 U.S.C. §9007(d)

*Recommendation:* Congress should revise the law to state that: All payments received by the Secretary of the Treasury under subsection (b) shall be deposited by him or her in the Presidential Election Campaign Fund established by section 9006(a).

*Explanation:* This change would allow the Fund to recapture monies repaid by convention-related committees of national major and minor parties, as well as by general election grant recipients. Currently the Fund recaptures only repayments made by primary matching fund recipients.

## **Contributions and Expenditures**

### **Contributions and Expenditures to Influence Federal and Non-Federal Elections (1989)**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §§441 and 434

*Recommendation:* Congress may wish to consider whether new legislation is needed to monitor political committees that engage in activities that influence both federal and nonfederal elections.

*Explanation:* The law requires that all funds spent to influence federal elections come from sources that are permissible under the limitations and prohibitions of the Act. Problems arise with the application of this provision when committees engage in activities that support both federal and nonfederal candidates. In this regard, the Commission has attempted to clarify the rules on allocating disbursements between federal and nonfederal election activity. (The Commission issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and conducted hearings.)

The District Court for the District of Columbia, in *Common Cause v. FEC*, confirmed the Commission's long-standing view that allocation is the appropriate way to reconcile its mandate (to monitor excessive and prohibited funds) and the limits on its jurisdiction (to regulate money influencing federal elections--but not state or local). In recent hearings, the Commission acknowledged that the allocation issue had been "clouded by allegations that the campaigns of both Presidential candidates raised large amounts of so-called 'soft money.'"<sup>2</sup> In light of this public concern, Congress may wish to reevaluate the

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<sup>2</sup> Commissioner Thomas J. Josefiak, opening statement at FEC hearings on amendments to 11 CFR 106.1 concerning the allocation of disbursements between federal and nonfederal accounts, December 15, 1988.



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Commission's role in regulating political committees that support both federal and nonfederal candidates.

### **Nonprofit Corporations (1989)**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §441b

*Recommendation:* In light of the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in Federal Election Commission v. Massachusetts Citizens for Life, Inc. (MCFL), Congress may wish to amend the provision prohibiting corporate and labor spending in connection with federal elections in order to incorporate in the statute the text of the Court's decision.

*Explanation:* In the Court's decision of December 15, 1986, the Court held that the Act's prohibition on corporate political expenditures was unconstitutional as applied to independent expenditures made by a narrowly defined type of nonprofit corporation. Since that time, the Commission has published a notice of proposed rulemaking and has conducted hearings on whether regulatory changes are needed as a result of the Court's decision. Congress may wish to consider whether statutory changes are required as well.

The Court found that certain nonprofit corporations were not subject to the prohibitions of 2 U.S.C. §441b. The Court determined, however, that these nonprofit corporations had to disclose some aspect of their financial activity--in particular, independent expenditures exceeding \$250 and identification of persons who contribute over \$200 to help fund these expenditures. The Court further ruled that spending for political activity could, at some point, become a major purpose of the corporation, and the organization would then become a political committee.

### **Certification of Voting Age Population Figures and Cost-of-Living Adjustment**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §§441a(c) and (e)

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider removing the requirement that the Secretary of Commerce certify to the Commission the voting age population of each Congressional district. At the same time, Congress should establish a deadline of February 15 for supplying the Commission with the remaining information concerning the voting age population for the nation as a whole and for each State. In addition, the same deadline should apply to the Secretary of Labor, who is required under the Act to provide the Commission with figures on the annual adjustment to the cost-of-living index.

*Explanation:* In order for the Commission to compute the coordinated party expenditure limits and the State-by-State expenditure limits for Presidential candidates, the Secretary of Commerce certifies the voting age population of the United States and of each State. 2 U.S.C. §441a(e). The certification for each Congressional district, also required under this provision, is not needed.

In addition, under 2 U.S.C. §441a(c), the Secretary of Labor is required to certify the annual adjustment in the cost-of-living index. In both instances, the timely receipt of these figures would enable the Commission to inform political committees of their spending limits early in the campaign cycle. Under present circumstances, where no deadline exists, the Commission has sometimes been unable to release the spending limit figures before June.

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### **Election Period Limitations**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §441a

*Recommendation:* The Commission recommends that limits on contributions to candidates be placed on an election-cycle basis, rather than the current per-election basis.

*Explanation:* The contribution limitations affecting contributions to candidates are structured on a "per-election" basis, thus necessitating dual bookkeeping or the adoption of some other method to distinguish between primary and general election contributions. The Act could be simplified by changing the contribution limitations from a "per-election" basis to an "election-cycle" basis. Thus, multicandidate committees could give up to \$10,000 and all other persons could give up to \$2,000 to an authorized committee at any point during the election cycle.

### **Application of Contribution Limitations to Family Members**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §441a

*Recommendation:* The Commission recommends that Congress examine the application of the contribution limitations to immediate family members.

*Explanation:* Under the current posture of the law, a family member is limited to contributing \$1,000 per election to a candidate. This limitation applies to spouses and parents, as well as other immediate family members. (See S. Conf. Rep. No.93-1237, 93rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 58 (1974) and *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 51 (footnote 57)(1976).) This limitation has caused the Commission substantial problems in attempting to implement and enforce the contribution limitations.<sup>3</sup>

Problems have arisen in enforcing the limitations where a candidate uses assets belonging to a parent. In some cases, a parent has made a substantial gift to his or her candidate-child while cautioning the candidate that this may well decrease the amount which the candidate would otherwise inherit upon the death of the parent.

The Commission recommends that Congress consider the difficulties arising from application of the contribution limitations to immediate family members.

### **Acceptance of Cash Contributions**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §441g

*Recommendation:* Congress may wish to modify the statute to make the treatment of 2 U.S.C. §441g, concerning cash contributions, consistent with other provisions of the Act. As currently drafted, 2 U.S.C. §441g prohibits only the **making** of cash contributions which, in the aggregate, exceed \$100 per candidate, per election. It does not address the issue of **accepting** cash contributions. Moreover, the current statutory language does not plainly prohibit cash contributions in excess of \$100 to political committees other than authorized committees of a candidate.

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<sup>3</sup> While the Commission has attempted through regulations to present an equitable solution to some of these problems (see 48 *Fed. Reg.* 19019 (April 27, 1983) as prescribed by the Commission on July 1, 1983), statutory resolution is required in this area.

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*Explanation:* Currently this provision focuses only on persons making the cash contributions. However, these cases generally come to light when a committee has accepted these funds. Yet the Commission has no recourse with respect to the committee in such cases. This can be a problem, particularly where primary matching funds are received on the basis of such contributions.

While the Commission, in its regulations at 11 CFR 110.4(c)(2), has included a provision requiring a committee receiving such a cash contribution to promptly return the excess over \$100, the statute does not explicitly make acceptance of these cash contributions a violation. The other sections of the Act dealing with prohibited contributions (i.e., Sections 441b on corporate and labor union contributions, 441c on contributions by government contractors, 441e on contributions by foreign nationals, and 441f on contributions in the name of another) all prohibit both the making and accepting of such contributions.

Secondly, the statutory text seems to suggest that the prohibition contained in §441g applies only to those contributions given to candidate committees. This language is at apparent odds with the Commission's understanding of the Congressional purpose to prohibit any cash contributions which exceed \$100 in Federal elections.

## Compliance

### Random Audits (1989)

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §438(b)

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider legislation that would permit the Commission to randomly audit political committees in an effort to promote voluntary compliance with the election law and ensure public confidence in the election process.

*Explanation:* In 1979, Congress amended the FECA to eliminate the Commission's explicit authority to conduct random audits. The Commission is concerned that this change has weakened its ability to deter abuse of the election law. Random audits can be an effective tool for promoting voluntary compliance with the Act and, at the same time, reassuring the public that committees are complying with the law. Random audits performed by IRS offer a good model. As a result of random tax audits, most taxpayers try to file accurate returns on time. Tax audits have also helped create the public perception that tax laws are enforced.

There are many ways to select committees for a random audit. One way would be to randomly select committees from a pool of all types of political committees identified by certain threshold criteria such as the amount of campaign receipts and, in the case of candidate committees, the percentage of votes won. With this approach, audits might be conducted in many states throughout the country.

Another approach would be to randomly select several Congressional districts and audit all political committees in those districts, for a given election cycle. This system might result in concentrating audits in fewer geographical areas.

Regardless of how random selections were made, it would be essential to include all types of political committees--PACs, party committees and candidate committees--and to ensure an impartial, even handed selection process.

### Modifying "Reason to Believe" Finding

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §437g

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider modifying the language pertaining to "reason to believe," contained in 2 U.S.C. §437g, in order to reduce the confusion sometimes experienced by respondents, the press and the public. One possible approach would be to change

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the statutory language from “the Commission finds reason to believe a violation of the Act *has* occurred” to “the Commission finds reason to believe a violation of the Act *may have* occurred.” Or Congress may wish to use some other less invidious language.

*Explanation:* Under the present statute, the Commission is required to make a finding that there is “reason to believe a violation has occurred” before it may investigate. Only then may the Commission request specific information from a respondent to determine whether, in fact, a violation has occurred. The statutory phrase “reason to believe” is misleading and does a disservice to both the Commission and the respondent. It implies that the Commission has evaluated the evidence and concluded that the respondent has violated the Act. In fact, however, a “reason to believe” finding simply means that the Commission believes a violation may have occurred if the facts as described in the complaint are true. An investigation permits the Commission to evaluate the validity of the facts as alleged.

If the problem is, in part, one of semantics, it would be helpful to substitute words that sound less accusatory and that more accurately reflect what, in fact, the Commission is doing at this early phase of enforcement.

In order to avoid perpetuating the erroneous conclusion that the Commission believes a respondent has violated the law every time it finds “reason to believe,” the statute should be amended.

### **Seeking Injunctions in Enforcement Cases**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §437g(a)(1)

*Recommendation:*<sup>4</sup> Congress should amend the enforcement procedures set forth in the statute so as to empower the Commission to promptly initiate a civil suit for injunctive relief in order to preserve the status quo when there is clear and convincing evidence that a substantial violation of the Act is about to occur. Under criteria expressly stated, the Commission should be authorized to initiate such civil action in a United States district court without awaiting expiration of the 15 day period for responding to a complaint or the other adminis-

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<sup>4</sup> Commissioner Elliott filed the following dissent: The Act presently enables the Commission to seek injunctive relief after the administrative process has been completed and this is more than sufficient. (See 2 U.S.C. §437g(a)(6)(A).)

I am unaware of any complaint filed with the Commission during the last three years which, in my opinion, would meet the four standards set forth in the legislative recommendation. Assuming a case was submitted which met these standards, I believe it would be inappropriate for the Commission to seek injunctive relief prior to a probable cause finding.

First, the very ability of the Commission to seek an injunction, especially during the “heat of the campaign,” opens the door to allegations of an arbitrary and politically motivated enforcement action by the Commission. The Commission’s decision to seek an injunction in one case while refusing to do so in another could easily be seen by candidates and respondents as politicizing the enforcement process.

Second, the Commission might easily be flooded with requests for injunctive relief for issues such as failure to file an October quarterly or a 12-day pre-general report. Although the Commission would have the discretion to deny all these requests for injunctive relief, in making that decision the Commission would bear the administrative burden of an immediate review of the factual issues.

Third, although the courts would be the final arbiter as to whether or not to grant an injunction, the mere decision by the Commission to proceed to seek an injunction during the final weeks of a campaign would cause a diversion of time and money and adverse publicity for a candidate during the most important period of the campaign.

For these reasons, I disagree with the recommendation to expand the power of the Commission to seek injunctive relief except as presently provided for in the Act.

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trative steps enumerated in the statute. The person against whom the Commission brought the action would enjoy the procedural protections afforded by the courts.

*Explanation:* On certain occasions in the heat of the campaign period, the Commission has been provided with information indicating that a violation of the Act is about to occur (or be repeated) and yet, because of the administrative steps set forth in the statute, has been unable to act swiftly and effectively in order to prevent the violation from occurring. In some instances the evidence of a violation has been clear-cut and the potential for an impact on a campaign or campaigns has been substantial. The Commission has felt constrained from seeking immediate judicial action by the requirements of the statute which mandate that a person be given 15 days to respond to a complaint, that a General Counsel's brief be issued, that there be an opportunity to respond to such brief, and that conciliation be attempted before court action may be initiated. The courts have indicated that the Commission has little if any discretion to deviate from the administrative procedures of the statute. *In re Carter-Mondale Reelection Committee, Inc.*, 642 F.2d 538 (D.C. Cir. 1980); *Common Cause v. Schmitt*, 512 F. Supp. 489 (D.D.C. 1980), *aff'd by an equally divided court* 455 U.S. 129 (1982); *Durkin for U.S. Senate v. FEC*, 2 *Fed. Elec. Camp. Fin. Guide* (CCH) para. 9147 (D.N.H. 1980). The Commission suggests that the standards that should govern whether it may seek prompt injunctive relief (which could be set forth in the statute itself) are:

1. There is a substantial likelihood that the facts set forth a potential violation of the Act;
2. Failure of the Commission to act expeditiously will result in irreparable harm to a party affected by the potential violation;
3. Expeditious action will not result in undue harm or prejudice to the interests of other persons; and
4. The public interest would be served by expeditious handling of the matter.

## Disclaimers

### Disclaimer Notices (1989)

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §441d

*Recommendation:* Congress should revise the statute to require registered political committees to display the appropriate disclaimer notice (when practicable) in any communication issued to the general public, regardless of its purpose or how it is distributed.

*Explanation:* Under 2 U.S.C. §441d, a disclaimer notice is only required when "expenditures" are made for two types of communications made through "public political advertising": (1) communications that solicit contributions and (2) communications that "expressly advocate" the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate. The Commission has encountered a number of problems with respect to this requirement.

First, the statutory language requiring the disclaimer notice refers specifically to "expenditures," suggesting that the requirement does not apply to disbursements that are exempt from the definition of "expenditure" such as "exempt activities" conducted by local and state party committees under, for example, 2 U.S.C. §431(9) (B) (viii). This proposal would make clear that all types of communications to the public would carry a disclaimer.

Second, the Commission has encountered difficulties in interpreting "public political advertising," particularly when volunteers have been involved with the preparation or distribution of the communication.



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Third, the Commission has devoted considerable time to determining whether a given communication in fact contains "express advocacy" or "solicitation" language. The recommendation here would erase this need.

Most of these problems would be eliminated if the language of 2 U.S.C. §441d were simplified to require a registered committee to display a disclaimer notice whenever it communicated to the public, regardless of the purpose of the communication and the means of preparing and distributing it. The Commission would no longer have to examine the content of communications or the manner in which they were disseminated to determine whether a disclaimer was required.

This proposal is not intended to eliminate exemptions for communications appearing in places where it is inconvenient or impracticable to display a disclaimer.

### **Fundraising Projects Operated by Unauthorized Committees**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §432(e)(4)

*Recommendation:*<sup>5</sup> Congress may wish to consider amending the statute, at 2 U.S.C. §432(e)(4), to clarify that a political committee that is not an authorized committee of any candidate may not use the name of a candidate in the name of any "project" or other fundraising activity of such committee.

*Explanation:* The statute now reads that a political committee that is not an authorized committee "shall not include the name of any candidate *in its name* [emphasis added]." In certain situations presented to the Commission the political committee in question has not included the name of any candidate in its official name as registered with the Commission, but has nonetheless carried out "projects" in support of a particular candidate using the name of the candidate in the letterhead and text of its materials. The likely result has been that recipients of communications from such political committees were led to believe that the committees were in fact authorized by the candidate whose name was used. The requirement that committees include a disclaimer regarding nonauthorization (2 U.S.C. §441d) has not proven adequate under these circumstances.

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<sup>5</sup> Commissioner Elliott filed the following dissent: I support the policy underlying this legislative recommendation and recognize the seriousness of the problem necessitating such a recommendation. However, the scope of the recommendation is far too broad and inflexible given the traditional fundraising events, especially those held by political parties and some unauthorized political committees. Party committees are not authorized committees and therefore would come under the general prohibitions included in the recommendation, precluding the use of a candidate's name for any activity of a party committee. Oftentimes, however, fundraising events conducted by a party committee incorporate the name of a well-known Member of Congress as a fundraising tool. Typically, the fundraising contributions are made in the form of checks made payable to the name of the event, e.g., "Happy Birthday, Senator Smith"; "Mike's Annual Barbecue"; "Sail With Senator Sanford"; "Roast Roberts." I do not believe Congress intends to preclude the use of the candidates' names in such activities, especially when the candidate is not only aware that his/her name is being used but approves and is actively participating in the event.

I would propose that the candidate be entitled to authorize the use of his or her name for such an event or activity provided the authorization is written. Again, I recognize the seriousness and the need to address this issue; however, Congress should not exclude fundraising tools which have been traditionally used by political committees.

Further, the impact of this recommendation has not been evaluated in the context of our joint fundraising regulations.

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The Commission believes that the intent behind the current provision is circumvented by the foregoing practice. Accordingly, the statute should be revised to clarify that the use of the name of a candidate in the name of any "project" is also prohibited.

### **Fraudulent Solicitation of Funds**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §441h

*Recommendation:* The current §441h prohibits fraudulent misrepresentation such as speaking, writing or acting on behalf of a candidate or committee on a matter which is damaging to such candidate or committee. It does not, however, prohibit persons from fraudulently soliciting contributions. A provision should be added to this section prohibiting persons from fraudulently misrepresenting themselves as representatives of candidates or political parties for the purpose of soliciting contributions which are not forwarded to or used by or on behalf of the candidate or party.

*Explanation:* The Commission has received a number of complaints that substantial amounts of money were raised fraudulently by persons or committees purporting to act on behalf of candidates. Candidates have complained that contributions which people believed were going for the benefit of the candidate were diverted for other purposes. Both the candidates and the contributors were harmed by such diversion. The candidates received less money because people desirous of contributing believed they had already done so, and the contributors' funds had been misused in a manner in which they did not intend. The Commission has been unable to take any action on these matters because the statute gives it no authority in this area.

## **Public Disclosure**

### **Commission as Sole Point of Entry for Disclosure Documents (revised 1989)**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §432(g)

*Recommendation:* The Commission recommends that it be the sole point of entry for all disclosure documents filed by Federal candidates and political committees.

*Explanation:* A single point of entry for all disclosure documents filed by political committees would eliminate any confusion about where candidates and committees are to file their reports. It would assist committee treasurers by having one office where they would file reports, address correspondence and ask questions. At present, conflicts may arise when more than one office sends out materials, makes requests for additional information and answers questions relating to the interpretation of the law. A single point of entry would also reduce the costs to the Federal government of maintaining three different offices, especially in the areas of personnel, equipment and data processing.

The Commission has authority to prepare and publish lists of nonfilers. It is extremely difficult to ascertain who has and who has not filed when reports may have been filed at or are in transit between two different offices. Separate points of entry also make it difficult for the Commission to track responses to compliance notices. Many responses and/or amendments may not be received by the Commission in a timely manner, even though they were sent on time by the candidate or committee. The delay in transmittal between two offices sometimes leads the Commission to believe that candidates and committees are not in compliance. A single point of entry would eliminate this confusion.

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Finally, a single point of entry would enhance disclosure. Often the public and FEC staff have difficulty deciphering information from reports filed with the Clerk and the Secretary because these reports have been photocopied several times. A single point of entry would reduce the number of times a report had to be photocopied, thereby rendering it more legible and ensuring the placement of more accurate information on the public record.

If the Commission received all documents, it would transmit on a daily basis file copies to the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House, as appropriate. The Commission notes that the report of the Institute of Politics of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, *An Analysis of the Impact of the Federal Election Campaign Act, 1972-78*, prepared for the House Administration Committee, recommends that all reports be filed directly with the Commission (Committee Print, 96th Cong., 1st Sess., at 122 (1979)).

### **Public Disclosure at State Level**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §439

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider relieving both political committees (other than candidate committees) and State election offices of the burdens inherent in the current requirement that political committees file copies of their reports with the Secretaries of State. One way this could be accomplished is by providing a system whereby the Secretary of State (or equivalent State officer) would tie into the Federal Election Commission's computerized disclosure data base.

*Explanation:* At the present time, multicandidate political committees are required to file copies of their reports (or portions thereof) with the Secretary of State in each of the States in which they support a candidate. State election offices carry a burden for storing and maintaining files of these reports. At the same time, political committees are burdened with the responsibility of making multiple copies of their reports and mailing them to the Secretaries of State.

With advances in computer technology, it is now possible to facilitate disclosure at the State level without requiring duplicate filing. Instead, State election offices would tie into the FEC's computer data base. The local press and public could access reports of local political committees through a computer hookup housed in their State election offices. All parties would benefit: political committees would no longer have to file duplicate reports with State offices; State offices would no longer have to provide storage and maintain files; and the FEC could maximize the cost effectiveness of its existing data base and computer system.

Such a system has already been tested in a pilot program and proven inexpensive and effective. Initially, we would propose that candidate committees and in-State party committees continue to file their reports both in Washington, D.C., and in their home States, in response to the high local demand for this information. Later, perhaps with improvements in information technology, the computerized system could embrace these committees as well.

### **State Filing for Presidential Candidate Committees**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §439

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider clarifying the State filing provisions for Presidential candidate committees to specify which particular parts of the reports filed by such committees with the FEC should also be filed with States in which the committees make expenditures. Consideration should be given to both the benefits and the costs of State disclosure.

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*Explanation:* Both States and committees have inquired about the specific requirements for Presidential candidate committees when filing reports with the States. The statute requires that a copy of the FEC reports shall be filed with all States in which a Presidential candidate committee makes expenditures. The question has arisen as to whether the full report should be filed with the State, or only those portions that disclose financial transactions in the State where the report is filed.

The Commission has considered two alternative solutions. The first alternative is to have Presidential candidate committees file, with each State in which they have made expenditures, a copy of the entire report filed with the FEC. This alternative enables local citizens to examine complete reports filed by candidates campaigning in a State. It also avoids reporting dilemmas for candidates whose expenditures in one State might influence a primary election in another.

The second alternative is to require that reports filed with the States contain all Summary pages and only those Receipts and Disbursements schedules that show transactions pertaining to the State in which a report is filed. This alternative would reduce filing and storage burdens on Presidential candidate committees and States. It would also make State filing requirements for Presidential candidate committees similar to those for unauthorized political committees. Under this approach, any person still interested in obtaining copies of a full report could do so by contacting the Public Disclosure Division of the FEC.

## Registration and Reporting

### Insolvency of Political Committees

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §433(d)

*Recommendation:* The Commission requests that Congress clarify its intention as to whether the Commission has a role in the determination of insolvency and liquidation of insolvent political committees. 2 U.S.C. §433(d) was amended in 1980 to read: "Nothing in this subsection may be construed to eliminate or limit the authority of the Commission to establish procedures for—(A) the determination of insolvency with respect to any political committee; (B) the orderly liquidation of an insolvent political committee, and the orderly application of its assets for the reduction of outstanding debts; and (C) the termination of an insolvent political committee after such liquidation and application of assets." The phrasing of this provision ("Nothing...may be construed to...limit") suggests that the Commission has such authority in some other provision of the Act, but the Act contains no such provision. If Congress intended the Commission to have a role in determining the insolvency of political committees and the liquidation of their assets, Congress should clarify the nature and scope of this authority.

*Explanation:* Under 2 U.S.C. §433(d)(1), a political committee may terminate only when it certifies in writing that it will no longer receive any contributions or make any disbursements and that the committee has no outstanding debts or obligations. The Act's 1979 Amendments added a provision to the law (2 U.S.C. §433(d)(2)) possibly permitting the Commission to establish procedures for determining insolvency with respect to political committees, as well as the orderly liquidation and termination of insolvent committees. In 1980, the Commission promulgated the "administrative termination" regulations at 11 CFR 102.4 after enactment of the 1979 Amendments, in response to 2 U.S.C. §433(d)(2). However, these procedures do not concern liquidation or application of assets of insolvent political committees.

Prior to 1980, the Commission adopted "Debt Settlement Procedures" under which the Commission reviews proposed debt settlements in order to determine whether the settlement will result in a potential violation of the Act. If it does not appear that such a violation will

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occur, the Commission permits the committee to cease reporting that debt once the settlement and payment are reported. The Commission believes this authority derives from 2 U.S.C. §434 and from its authority to correct and prevent violations of the Act, but it does not appear as a grant of authority beyond a review of the specific debt settlement request, to order application of committee assets.

It has been suggested that review by the Commission of the settlement of debts owed by political committees at less than face value may lead to the circumvention of the limitations on contributions specified by 2 U.S.C. §§441a and 441b. The amounts involved are frequently substantial, and the creditors are often corporate entities. Concern has also been expressed regarding the possibility that committees could incur further debts after settling some, or that a committee could pay off one creditor at less than the dollar value owed and subsequently raise additional funds to pay off a "friendly" creditor at full value.

When clarifying the nature and scope of the Commission's authority to determine the insolvency of political committees, Congress should consider the impact on the Commission's operations. An expanded role in this area might increase the Commission's workload, thus requiring additional staff and funds.

### **Waiver Authority**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §434

*Recommendation:* Congress should give the Commission authority to grant general waivers or exemptions from the reporting requirements of the Act for classifications and categories of political committees.

*Explanation:* In cases where reporting requirements are excessive or unnecessary, it would be helpful if the Commission had authority to suspend the reporting requirements of the Act. For example, the Commission has encountered several problems relating to the reporting requirements of authorized committees whose respective candidates were not on the election ballot. The Commission had to consider whether the election-year reporting requirements were fully applicable to candidate committees operating under one of the following circumstances:

- The candidate withdraws from nomination prior to having his or her name placed on the ballot.
- The candidate loses the primary and therefore is not on the general election ballot.
- The candidate is unchallenged and his or her name does not appear on the election ballot.

Moreover, a Presidential primary candidate who has triggered the \$100,000 threshold but who is no longer actively seeking nomination should be able to reduce reporting from a monthly to a quarterly schedule.

In some instances, the reporting problems reflect the unique features of certain State election procedures. A waiver authority would enable the Commission to respond flexibly and fairly in these situations.

In the 1979 Amendments to the Act, Congress repealed 2 U.S.C. §436, which had provided the Commission with a limited waiver authority. There remains, however, a need for a waiver authority. It would enable the Commission to reduce needlessly burdensome disclosure requirements.



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### **Campaign-Cycle Reporting**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §434

*Recommendation:* Congress should revise the law to require authorized candidate committees to report on a campaign-to-date basis, rather than a calendar year cycle, as is now required.

*Explanation:* Under the current law, a reporter or researcher must compile the total figures from several year-end reports in order to determine the true costs of a committee. In the case of Senate campaigns, which may extend over a six-year period, this change would be particularly helpful.

### **Monthly Reporting for Congressional Candidates**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §434(a)(2)

*Recommendation:* The principal campaign committee of a Congressional candidate should have the **option** of filing monthly reports in lieu of quarterly reports.

*Explanation:* Political committees, other than principal campaign committees, may choose under the Act to file either monthly or quarterly reports during an election year. Committees choose the monthly option when they have a high volume of activity. Under those circumstances, accounting and reporting are easier on a monthly basis because fewer transactions have taken place during that time. Consequently, the committee's reports will be more accurate.

Principal campaign committees can also have a large volume of receipts and expenditures. This is particularly true with Senatorial campaigns. These committees should be able to choose a more frequent filing schedule so that their reporting covers less activity and is easier to do.

### **Monthly Reports (revised 1989)**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §434(a)(3)(B) and (4)(B)

*Recommendation:* Congress should change the reporting deadline for monthly filers from the twentieth to the fifteenth of the month.

*Explanation:* Committees filing monthly reports are now required to file reports disclosing each month's activity by the twentieth day of the following month. Particularly in the fast-paced Presidential primary period, this 20-day lag does not meet the public's need for timely disclosure. In light of the increased use of computerized recordkeeping by political committees, imposing a monthly filing deadline of the fifteenth of the month would not be unduly burdensome and would ensure timely disclosure of crucial financial data.

### **Reporting Payments to Persons Providing Goods and Services**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §434(b)(5)(A), (6)(A) and (6)(B)

*Recommendation:* The current statute requires reporting "the name and address of each...person to whom an expenditure in an aggregate amount or value in excess of \$200 within the calendar year is made by the reporting committee to meet a candidate or committee operating expense, together with the date, amount, and purpose of such operating expenditure." Congress should clarify whether this is meant, in all instances, to require reporting

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committees to disclose only the payments made by the committee or whether, in some instances, 1) the reporting committees must require initial payees to report, to the committees, their payments to secondary payees, and 2) the reporting committees, in turn, must maintain this information and disclose it to the public by amending their reports through memo entries.

*Explanation:* The Commission has encountered on several occasions the question of just how detailed a committee's reporting of disbursements must be. See, e.g., Advisory Opinion 1983-25, 1 *Fed. Election Camp. Fin. Guide* (CCH), para. 5742 (Dec. 22, 1983) (Presidential candidate's committee not required to disclose the names, addresses, dates or amounts of payments made by a general media consultant retained by the committee); Advisory Opinion 1984-8, 1 *Fed. Election Camp. Fin. Guide* (CCH), para. 5756 (Apr. 20, 1984) (House candidate's committee only required to itemize payments made to the candidate for travel and subsistence, not the payments made by the candidate to the actual providers of services); *Financial Control and Compliance Manual for General Election Candidates Receiving Public Financing*, Federal Election Commission, pp. IV 39-44 (1984) (Distinguishing committee advances or reimbursements to campaign staff for travel and subsistence from other advances or reimbursements to such staff and requiring itemization of payments made by campaign staff only as to the latter). Congressional intent in the area is not expressly stated, and the Commission believes that statutory clarification would be beneficial. In the area of Presidential public financing, where the Commission is responsible for monitoring whether candidate disbursements are for qualified campaign expenses (see 26 U.S.C. §§9004(c) and 9038(b)(2)), guidance would be particularly useful.

### **Verifying Multicandidate Committee Status**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §§438(a)(6)(C), 441a(a)(2) and (a)(4)

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider modifying those provisions of the Act relating to multicandidate committees in order to reduce the problems encountered by contributor committees in reporting their multicandidate committee status, and by candidate committees and the Commission in verifying the multicandidate committee status of contributor committees. In this regard, Congress might consider requiring political committees to notify the Commission once they have satisfied the three criteria for becoming a multicandidate committee, namely, once a political committee has been registered for not less than 6 months, has received contributions from more than 50 persons and has contributed to at least 5 candidates for Federal office.

*Explanation:* Under the current statute, political committees may not contribute more than \$1,000 to each candidate, per election, until they qualify as a multicandidate committee, at which point they may contribute up to \$5,000 per candidate, per election. To qualify for this special status, a committee must meet three standards:

- Support 5 or more Federal candidates;
- Receive contributions from more than 50 contributors; and
- Have been registered as a political committee for at least 6 months.

The Commission is statutorily responsible for maintaining an index of committees that have qualified as multicandidate committees. The index enables recipient candidate committees to determine whether a given contributor has in fact qualified as a multicandidate committee and therefore is entitled to contribute up to the higher limit. The Commission's Multicandidate Index, however, is not current because it depends upon information filed periodically by political committees. Committees inform the Commission that they have qualified as multicandidate committees by checking the appropriate box on their regularly scheduled report. If, however, they qualify shortly after they have filed their report, several months

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may elapse before they disclose their new status on the next report. With semiannual reporting in a nonelection year, for example, a committee may become a multicandidate committee in August, but the Commission's Index will not reveal this until after the January 31 report has been filed, coded and entered into the Commission's computer.

Because candidate committees cannot totally rely on the Commission's Multicandidate Index for current information, they sometimes ask the contributing committee directly whether the committee is a multicandidate committee. Contributing committees, however, are not always clear as to what it means to be a multicandidate committee. Some committees erroneously believe that they qualify as a multicandidate committee merely because they have contributed to more than one Federal candidate. They are not aware that they must have contributed to 5 or more Federal candidates and also have more than 50 contributors and have been registered for at least 6 months.

## Miscellaneous

### Draft Committees

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §§431(8)(A)(i) and (9)(A)(i), 441a(a)(1) and 441b(b)

*Recommendation:* Congress should consider the following amendments to the Act in order to prevent a proliferation of "draft" committees and to reaffirm Congressional intent that draft committees are "political committees" subject to the Act's provisions.

1. *Bring Funds Raised and Spent for Undeclared but Clearly Identified Candidates Within the Act's Purview.* Section 431(8)(A)(i) should be amended to include in the definition of "contribution" funds contributed by persons "for the purpose of influencing a clearly identified **individual** to seek nomination for election or election to Federal office...." Section 431(9)(A)(i) should be similarly amended to include within the definition of "expenditure" funds expended by persons on behalf of such "a clearly identified **individual**."
2. *Restrict Corporate and Labor Organization Support for Undeclared but Clearly Identified Candidates.* Section 441b(b) should be revised to expressly state that corporations, labor organizations and national banks are prohibited from making contributions or expenditures "for the purpose of influencing a clearly identified **individual** to seek nomination for election or election..." to Federal office.
3. *Limit Contributions to Draft Committees.* The law should include explicit language stating that no person shall make contributions to **any** committee (including a draft committee) established to influence the nomination or election of a clearly identified **individual** for any Federal office which, in the aggregate, exceed that person's contribution limit, per candidate, per election.

*Explanation:* These proposed amendments were prompted by the decisions of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in *FEC v. Machinists Non-Partisan Political League* and *FEC v. Citizens for Democratic Alternatives in 1980* and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit in *FEC v. Florida for Kennedy Committee*. The District of Columbia Circuit held that the Act, as amended in 1979, regulated only the **reporting requirements** of draft committees. The Commission sought review of this decision by the Supreme Court, but the Court declined to hear the case. Similarly, the Eleventh Circuit found that "committees organized to 'draft' a person for federal office" are not "political committees" within the Commission's investigative authority. The Commission believes that the appeals court rulings create a serious imbalance in the election law and the political process because a nonauthorized group organized to support someone who has not

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yet become a candidate may operate completely outside the strictures of the Federal Election Campaign Act. However, any group organized to support someone who has in fact become a candidate is subject to the Act's registration and reporting requirements and contribution limitations. Therefore, the potential exists for funneling large aggregations of money, both corporate and private, into the Federal electoral process through unlimited contributions made to nonauthorized draft committees that support a person who has not yet become a candidate. These recommendations seek to avert that possibility.

### **Honoraria**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §§431(8)(B)(xiv) and 441i

*Recommendation:* The Commission offers two suggestions concerning honoraria.

1. Section 441i should be placed under the Ethics in Government Act.
2. As technical amendments, Sections 441i(c) and (d), which pertain to the annual limit on receiving honoraria (now repealed), should be repealed. Additionally, 2 U.S.C. §431(8)(B)(xiv), which refers to the definition of honorarium in Section 441i, should be modified to contain the definition itself.

*Explanation:* Congress eliminated the \$25,000 annual limit on the amount of honoraria that could be accepted, but it did not take out these two sections, which only apply to the \$25,000 limit. This clarification would eliminate confusion for officeholders and thereby help the Commission in its administration of the Act.

### **Budget Reimbursement Fund (revised 1989)**

*Section:* 2 U.S.C. §438

*Recommendation:* The Commission recommends that Congress establish a reimbursement account for the Commission so that expenses incurred in preparing copies of documents, publications and computer tapes sold to the public are recovered by the Commission. Similarly, costs awarded to the Commission in litigation (e.g., printing, but not civil penalties) and payments for Commission expenses incurred in responding to Freedom of Information Act requests should be payable to the reimbursement fund. The Commission should be able to use such reimbursements to cover its costs for these services, without fiscal year limitation, and without a reduction in the Commission's appropriation.

*Explanation:* At the present time, copies of reports, microfilm, and computer tapes are sold to the public at the Commission's cost. However, instead of the funds being used to reimburse the Commission for its expenses in producing the materials, they are credited to the U.S. Treasury. The effect on the Commission of selling materials is thus the same as if the materials had been given away. The Commission absorbs the entire cost. In FY 1988, in return for services and materials it offered the public, the FEC collected and transferred \$123,790 in miscellaneous receipts to the Treasury. During the first three months of FY 1989, \$25,490 was transferred to the Treasury. Establishment of a reimbursement fund, into which fees for such materials would be paid, would permit this money to be applied to further dissemination of information. Note, however, that a reimbursement fund would not be applied to the distribution of FEC informational materials to candidates and registered political committees. They would continue to receive free publications that help them comply with the Federal election laws.

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There should be no restriction on the use of reimbursed funds in a particular year to avoid the possibility of having funds lapse.