

Fair Campaign Practices Act

Candidate Filing Guide

Twelfth Edition



Elections Division
Office of the Secretary of State
Jim Bennett, Secretary of State
State of Alabama

CANDIDATE CHECK LIST

Filing requirements for the following statements or reports are mentioned in this publication. **Other requirements may exist** for specific offices or to satisfy political party rules. When qualifying, check for further information on any additional requirements.

FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICES ACT

DATE(S) FILED

- Appointment of Principal Campaign Committee - see page 5 _____
- FCPA Reports - see page 14 _____
 - Annual Report for Previous Calendar Year _____
 - Monthly Reports _____
 - Primary Election Weekly Reports _____
 - Primary Election Daily Reports _____
Legislative, state school board, and statewide candidates. See page 14.
 - Primary Runoff Election Weekly Reports _____
 - Primary Runoff Election Daily Reports _____
Legislative, state school board, and statewide candidates. See page 14.
 - General Election Weekly Reports _____
 - General Election Daily Reports _____
Legislative, state school board, and statewide candidates. See page 14.
 - Annual Report for Election Year _____

ETHICS

- Statement of Economic Interests - See page 6 _____

BALLOT ACCESS

- Qualified for ballot access _____

JUDICIAL ELECTIONS

- Copy of "Statement of Economic Interests" filed with Clerk of the Alabama Supreme Court
Remember, original is filed with appropriate election official upon becoming a candidate. _____
- "Disclosure Statement of Financial Interests" with Clerk of the Alabama Supreme Court. _____
- Annual Report required by §12-24-2(a) - See page 38 _____

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JIM BENNETT
SECRETARY OF STATE

Dear Fellow Alabamians:

We are blessed to live in a nation where we have the freedom to choose our elected officials. This precious right has been won and protected by our military, our brave men and women who have fought to defend our liberty.

It is my pleasure, along with the staff of the Secretary of State's Elections Division, to provide you with this Candidate's Filing Guide to the Fair Campaign Practices Act. We hope that you will find this book a valuable source of information.

While this filing guide addresses some of the most frequently asked questions concerning the FCPA, it should not be used as a substitute for the Code of Alabama, 1975.

Should you need further assistance, please contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division at 1-800-274-8683 or 334-242-7210.

We are here to serve you and it would be our honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Bennett".

Jim Bennett
Secretary of State

SPECIAL NOTE FOR FEDERAL CANDIDATES

This filing guide applies to candidates for state, county and municipal offices. Federal candidates must follow reporting guidelines and deadlines administered by the Federal Elections Commission (FEC). For more information, please contact the FEC at:

Federal Elections Commission
999 E Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20463
1-800-424-9530
www.fec.gov



PUBLICATION NOTES

FCPA CANDIDATE FILING GUIDE - TWELFTH EDITION

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Legal Disclaimer

This document is not a substitute for the *CODE OF ALABAMA, 1975*. It is provided as a guide and is not intended to be an authoritative statement of law. For further legal information, please consult the Code of Alabama, other appropriate legal resources, or your attorney.

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► ***HAVE GENERAL QUESTIONS OR NEED FORMS?***

Contact the Office of the Secretary of State

Mailing Address: Elections Division
 Office of the Secretary of State
 P.O. Box 5616
 Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5616

Telephone: 334-242-7210 or 1-800-274-8683

General FAX: 334-242-2444

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World Wide Web: www.alabamavotes.gov

E-mail: alavoter@vote.alabama.gov

► ***HAVE ONLINE FILING QUESTIONS?***

World Wide Web: fcpa.alabamavotes.gov

HelpDesk Telephone: 888-864-8910

► ***NEED INFORMATION FOR COMPLYING WITH THE ETHICS ACT?***

Contact the Alabama Ethics Commission

Telephone: 334-242-2997

World Wide Web: ethics.alabama.gov

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Chapter I

Getting Started

The Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA), the state's campaign finance law, is found in the CODE OF ALABAMA 1975, at §17-5-1 through §17-5-20. It sets the rules for how and when candidates can raise and spend money. The law also specifies how campaign finance activities are reported.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE COMMITTEE MANDATORY

The law requires every candidate to organize a campaign finance committee and file an APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE form, which lists who serves on the committee. [§17-5-4]

The committee form must be filed within five (5) days of becoming a candidate. For purposes of the FCPA, the law defines two ways to become a candidate [see §17-5-2(a)(1)]:

1. Reaching the disclosure threshold by either raising or spending \$1,000, regardless of office sought.
2. Qualifying as a candidate with a political party or by filing a petition as a third party or independent candidate.

If, by the deadline for qualifying with a political party, an individual has not reached the office threshold and, thus, has not filed an APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE form, the campaign finance committee section on the political party qualification form may be used to set up the committee. The important thing to remember about the committee form is that it must be filed with the Secretary of State (for state offices) or with the probate judge (for local offices) within five days of becoming a candidate. The candidate should be sure party officials (or the municipal clerk, in the case of a city candidate) forward a copy of the qualifying form by that deadline to the appropriate FCPA filing office or else provide him or her with a copy to file on his or her own behalf.

Effective June 3, 2013, all legislative, state school board and statewide candidates who receive \$10,000 or more in contributions during an election cycle must file their APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE form online at fcpa.alabamavotes.gov.

Effective August 1, 2013, candidates for county office may choose to file electronically with the Secretary of State instead of filing manually with the probate judge. Each county candidate who so chooses is required to file the appropriate form with the probate judge stating that all of the candidate's required FCPA forms and reports will be filed online with the Secretary of State throughout the election cycle.

A candidate may either serve as the campaign finance committee or may appoint from two to five persons. The Office of the Secretary of State recommends that the candidate appoint at least two persons to serve on the principal campaign committee so that in the event of death or incapacitation, the remaining committee members can legally transact business.

A candidate may also select a DESIGNATED FILING AGENT when appointing his campaign finance committee. That agent will be authorized to file all required reports for the candidate during the election cycle.

STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Every candidate must simultaneously file a **STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS** form upon filing as a candidate with the appropriate election official. [§36-25-15] This form covers the previous calendar year. A candidate who has a current **STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS** on file with the Ethics Commission does not have to file a duplicate form. For questions about filing the **STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS** electronically, please contact the Ethics Commission.

If the individual becomes a candidate by reaching the threshold for raising or spending campaign funds, the **STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS** must be submitted with the **APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE** form to the appropriate election official: candidates for state office file with the Secretary of State; candidates for county office file with the judge of probate. Candidates for city or town office file with the judge of probate in the county in which the city or town hall is located.

If the individual becomes a candidate by qualifying with a political party, the **STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS** must be submitted to the political party with his or her qualifying papers.

If the individual is seeking ballot access by submitting a petition for independent candidacy, the **STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS** must be submitted with the petition to the appropriate election official: the Secretary of State for state candidates or the judge of probate for county candidates.

If a candidate does not submit a **STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS** in accordance with the requirements of §36-25-15, his or her name shall not appear on the ballot, and he or she shall be deemed not qualified as a candidate in that election. The appropriate election official shall remove the name of that candidate from the ballot. [AG's Opinion 98-00200]

AFTER THE MANDATORY COMMITTEE FILING

While every candidate must appoint a principal campaign committee, candidates who have not reached the \$1,000 threshold are exempt from filing the monthly, weekly and daily FCPA reports until the threshold is reached. [AG's Opinion 90-00343] Otherwise, these reports are due prior to an election. [§17-5-8]

Though not required to file, candidates who have not reached their threshold may still choose to file the optional **WAIVER OF REPORT** form if they are concerned about the appearance of noncompliance.

After reaching the threshold, a candidate files each FCPA report at the required times. All contributions, including those received to reach the threshold, are reported.

Contributions from a single source and expenditures made to a single recipient that are greater than \$100 must be itemized on these reports. Therefore, it is important for a candidate to maintain some type of internal record for contributions of \$100 or less, since an additional donation from the same contributor could bring the total to more than \$100 and result in a need to itemize that contributor's contributions. The same is true for expenditures of \$100 or less.

Because all candidates for all legislative, state school board and statewide offices who receive \$10,000 or more in contributions during an election cycle must file their FCPA reports online, no paper forms are necessary. The online FCPA reporting system contains everything a candidate needs to record contributions and expenditures and to file the required reports.

A county or municipal candidate may request forms for filing these reports from either the Office of the Secretary of State or from the local probate judge. The forms are also available on the Secretary of State’s website. Forms and FCPA educational materials, such as this book, are supplied at no charge to the candidate. However, a candidate is not required to use the forms developed by the Office of the Secretary of State, as long as the information required by the FCPA is included in the report. [AG’s Opinion 90-00211]

Electronic filing shall be required beginning with the 2014 election cycle. Campaign committees and PACs receiving \$10,000 or less in an election cycle are exempt from filing FCPA reports electronically. However, these campaign committees are still required to paper-file disclosure forms. These reports may be submitted by FAX rather than mailed or hand-delivered. [AG Opinion 2012-028]

Candidates who spend more than \$1,000 on an “electioneering communication” are required to file disclosure reports. See CHAPTER III, CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING, for further information on this section of the law. The reports must identify the source or sources of the funds used for the electioneering communication and the recipients of expenditures related to the electioneering communication. [§17-5-8(h)]

This reporting requirement applies even if the candidate has not yet reached the filing threshold for the office sought by the candidate. However, the candidate is not required to duplicate any reporting.

FILING LOCATIONS

1) Reports for District, Circuit, Legislative, and Statewide Offices

For those candidates who are not filing online, reports are submitted to the Office of the Secretary of State. The mailing address is:

Office of the Secretary of State
P.O. Box 5616
Montgomery, AL 36103-5616

Candidates hand-delivering reports should bring them to the Elections Division located on the second floor of the State Capitol in room E-208, which is in the east wing (just off the

rotunda on the 2nd floor).

2) Reports for local offices (municipal and county)

Municipal and county reports are submitted to the local office of the probate judge, unless a county candidate chooses to file electronically with the Secretary of State.

DEADLINES

According to the FCPA, forms that are hand-delivered or sent by regular United States mail must be received on or before the due date.

In order for disclosure reports sent by certified or registered United States mail to be deemed timely filed, they must be postmarked no later than two days prior to the due date set in law. [§17-5-10(b)]

For state campaign committees and state political action committees eligible to submit reports by FAX, the Secretary of State's FAX number is 334-353-2295.

FILING SCHEDULE

During the election cycle, but no earlier than 12 months prior to an election, campaign finance disclosure reports are filed at specific times before the election.

The FCPA filing calendar for the current election year is available from the Secretary of State's office and is published on its web site. Please take careful note of all deadlines.

The online FCPA reporting system contains a filing calendar for each election cycle; each candidate should choose the appropriate calendar for his or her race and the system will automatically generate the correct calendar for the candidate to follow.

Additionally, principal campaign committees and political action committees must disclose the receipt of any single contribution of \$20,000 or more within two (2) business days of receiving the contribution if the contribution is not reported in a monthly, weekly, or daily report. [§17-5-8.1(c)]

PRE-ELECTION REPORTS

1) Monthly Report

Monthly reports are due no later than the second business day of the following month and must include all reportable transactions for the previous full month. [§17-5-8(a)(1)]

2) Weekly Report

Weekly reports are due on the Monday of the following week for each of the four weeks before the election date; a week is defined as running from a Saturday to a Friday. The first weekly report shall include all reportable transactions that occurred since the most recently filed prior report. [§17-5-8(a)(2)]

3) Daily Report (if applicable)

Daily reports apply only to candidates for state legislature, state school board, and statewide offices. Daily reports do not apply to candidates for county and city offices or to candidates for district or circuit court, circuit clerk, or district attorney.

In some instances, campaign committees for state offices and political action committees are required to file daily reports. Beginning on the 8th day prior to the election, daily reports are due for principal campaign committees or PACs that receive or spend \$5,000 or more on any day with a view toward influencing the election. [§17-5-8(a)(3)] Once a principal campaign committee or PAC meets this daily amount, it must file daily reports up until the election date.

Daily reports are due each filing day by 11:59pm, including Saturday and Sunday. The last daily report is due by noon on the day before the election. [§17-5-8(a)(3)a.]

4) Major Contribution Report (if applicable)

Principal campaign committees must disclose the receipt of any single contribution of \$20,000 or more within two (2) business days of receiving the contribution if it is not included in a monthly, weekly, or daily report. [§17-5-8.1(c)] The term “contribution” includes monetary and in-kind contributions as well as loans and the other transfers to the principal campaign

committee or political action committee.

If not included on a monthly, weekly, or daily report, the contribution is to be filed on a Major Contribution Report form available in the electronic filing system or from the Secretary of State's Election Division.

5) Duplicate Reports

No duplicate reports are required by the law. A political action committee or principal campaign committee that is required to file a daily report is not required to also file a weekly report for the week preceding an election. A committee required to file a weekly report is not required to also file a monthly report in the month in which the election is held. A committee required to file a monthly report is not required to also file an annual report in the year in which the election is held. [§17-5-8(k)]

ANNUAL REPORTS

An annual report covering the previous year is due no later than January 31 of the succeeding year. [§17-5-8(b)]

PENALTIES

The 2013 revisions to the FCPA expanded the penalties for noncompliance.

A candidate who intentionally violates a reporting requirement is guilty, upon conviction, of a Class A misdemeanor. [17-5-19(b)]

A candidate who intentionally violates any section other than 17-5-7 of the FCPA is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor. [17-5-19(a)]

Any person who intentionally violates §17-5-7, which addresses limits on candidates receiving campaign contributions and spending campaign money is guilty, upon conviction, of a Class B felony [§17-5-19(c)]. See CHAPTER II, CAMPAIGN FUNDS, for further information on this section of the law.

The FCPA prohibits any candidate from accepting more than \$1,000 from a principal campaign committee of a federal candidate. [§17-5-15.1(a)] A candidate who violates this provision is guilty, upon

conviction, of a Class C felony. [§17-5-15.1(b)]

The FCPA now imposes a civil penalty on any candidate who fails to timely or accurately file any required report [§17-5-19(d)]. The following fines will be assessed and paid to the county or the state General Fund:

- ▶ the greater of \$300 or 10% of the amount not properly reported for a first offense in an election cycle;
- ▶ the greater of \$600 or 15% of the amount not properly reported for a second offense in an election cycle; or
- ▶ the greater of \$1,200 or 20% of the amount not properly reported for a third and all subsequent offenses in an election cycle.

A fourth failure to properly file a required FCPA report creates a rebuttable presumption that the candidate is intentionally violating the statute and criminal prosecution may occur.

Any candidate who voluntarily files an amended report to correct an error without being prompted by the filing official, will not be subjected to the civil penalty. In the case of a candidate, the correction must be filed prior to the election at issue. In the case of a political action committee, the correction must be filed prior to the election which the contribution was given to influence. [§17-5-19(d)]

FORMS

FCPA candidate forms fall into two categories: 1) committee forms and 2) disclosure filings. Disclosure filings are submitted as pre-election reports (i.e. monthly, weekly, daily reports), annual reports (due each January, except for the year in which a candidate participates in an election), and termination reports (filed upon dissolution of a committee).

As noted previously, candidates who are required to file electronically will have access to all the forms online, and after registering with the online FCPA reporting system, will no longer file paper forms for any reason.

COMMITTEE FORMS

Candidates have two committee filings, the **APPOINTMENT**

OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE form, used to set up the committee, and the **STATEMENT OF DISSOLUTION**, filed when the committee is closed.

The importance of the mandatory committee filing has already been discussed on pages 5 and 6. Once a committee is formed and the threshold reached, a candidate continues filing disclosure reports until the committee is dissolved.

CHANGES/UPDATES. Whenever a change takes place in the committee, such as the addition or removal of officers or members, change of phone number or address, or change of name for the political committee, candidates may provide the new information by filing a new **APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE** form as discussed on pages 5 and 6. [§17-5-5(c)]

STATEMENT OF DISSOLUTION. Once a candidate determines that he or she will no longer receive contributions or make expenditures, a **STATEMENT OF DISSOLUTION** form must be filed [§17-5-5(d)]. This form may be accompanied by a **TERMINATION REPORT** which itemizes all contributions/expenditures of more than \$100 received or made since the last itemized report. The **TERMINATION REPORT** is filed using FORMS 1A-5, discussed under the **ANNUAL REPORT** and pre-election report forms sections on this and the following pages. If the **TERMINATION REPORT** is not filed with the **STATEMENT OF DISSOLUTION**, then the candidate must file the requisite **ANNUAL REPORT** covering the last year of activity.

The candidate must also disclose how any excess funds will be used. See page 18 for information on the law and excess funds.

FCPA DISCLOSURE FILINGS

Upon reaching the disclosure threshold by either raising or spending \$1,000, a candidate is responsible for filing the following disclosure reports, itemizing contributions or expenditures of more than \$100:

- ▶ **Monthly Reports** – due no later than the second business day of the following month and must include all reportable transactions for the previous full month.

- ▶ **Weekly Reports** – due on the Monday of the following week for each of the four weeks before the election date; for reporting purposes, a week is defined as running from a Saturday to a Friday.
- ▶ **Daily Reports** – beginning on the 8th day prior to the election, daily reports are due for principal campaign committees and PACs that receive or spend \$5,000 or more on any day with a view toward influencing the election. Once a principal campaign committee or PAC meets this daily amount, it must file daily reports on each day prior to the election. Daily reports do not apply to circuit, district, county, and city candidates.
- ▶ **Major Contribution Report.** Principal campaign committees and PACs must file a report disclosing the receipt of any single contribution of \$20,000 or more within two (2) business days of receiving the contribution if the contribution has not already been reported in a finance disclosure report.

FCPA REPORT FORMS (FORMS 1-5)

Form 1: Summary of Contributions and Expenditures. This FCPA form must be signed by the candidate or elected official and notarized. However, for electronically filed reports, the form is electronically signed and does not require notarization.

Form 2: Cash Contributions. The FCPA requires that cash contributions of more than \$100 be itemized. If they choose to do so, candidates may itemize contributions of \$100 or less, but this is not required by law. However, if contributions of \$100 or less are not itemized, the law does require that they be totaled and reported. They may be reported as “non-itemized” contributions on **FORM 1**.

As mentioned earlier, some type of campaign bookkeeping system should be used to track contributors making small donations of \$100 or less per contribution. If the combined contributions from any one contributor total more than \$100, an itemized

entry on **FORM 2** is then required.

Form 3: In-kind Contributions. An “in-kind” contribution is made when equipment, furniture, office space, or some other item of value other than money is contributed or used. A reasonable market value should be listed.

Form 4: Receipts from other Sources. Receipts from other sources are usually funds received through interest payments on a political committee bank account, loans made to the committee or refunds.

Form 5: Expenditures. The FCPA requires that expenditures of more than \$100 be itemized. Candidates may itemize expenditures of \$100 or less, but this is not required by law. However, if the expenditures of \$100 or less are not itemized, the law does require that they be totaled and reported. They may be reported as “non-itemized” expenditures on **FORM 1**.

As with contributions, some type of campaign bookkeeping system should be used to track small expenditures. If expenditures to the same vendor total more than \$100, an itemized entry on **FORM 5** is then required.

ANNUAL REPORT

The FCPA requires candidates to file an **ANNUAL REPORT** by January 31. This report covers all contributions and expenditures for the campaign committee for the preceding calendar year.

The **ANNUAL REPORT** is comprised of the same forms as the other FCPA disclosure reports, discussed in the previous section, with one exception.

FORM 1 of the disclosure reports is replaced by **FORM 1A**, a form specifically designed for the purposes of the **ANNUAL REPORT**. **FORM 1A** is designed with two sections.

Section I summarizes totals of contributions/expenditures since the last filing.

Section II is a summary of contributions/expenditures for January

1-December 31 of the previous year. **FORM 1A** must be notarized if filed on paper.

In the itemized sections of the **ANNUAL REPORT (FORMS 2-5)**, candidates include those entries of more than \$100 that have been received or spent since the last itemized report.

WAIVER OF REPORT (OPTIONAL FORM)

Those principal campaign committees that have not reached the contribution/expenditure threshold are not required to file reports. However, an optional **WAIVER OF REPORT FORM** is provided for those who wish to place a record of their status in a formal FCPA report.

PUBLIC ACCESS

The FCPA requires the Secretary of State and probate judges to make the campaign finance reports available for public inspection and copying during regular office hours.

However, the law specifies that information copied from the reports may not be sold or used by any political party or any political committee to solicit contributions or for commercial purposes, without the express written permission of the candidate or political committee reporting the information. [§17-5-11(2)]

POINTS TO NOTE

Campaign Activities. The FCPA contains other provisions, in addition to those dealing with campaign finance reporting. The Office of the Secretary of State recommends a complete reading of the act which is contained in the Code of Alabama, 1975, §17-5-1 through §17-5-20.

Prohibitions. Candidates should note the statutes on conduct that are contained in §17-17-33 through §17-17-34 of the Code of Alabama. Among the prohibited activities are making a contribution in someone else's name, buying votes, interfering with a person's right to freely cast a vote, soliciting money or anything of value by physical force, job discrimination, financial reprisal, or threats, or fraudulently misrepresenting oneself as acting for a candidate.

Other sections of state law also address campaign behavior; see pages 17 through 20 for highlights of those statutes.

Chapter II

Campaign Funds

The FCPA has strict controls on the purposes for which a candidate may solicit campaign funds, how the funds can be spent, and when candidates can raise money. In the 2010 special legislative session, the Legislature, through Act of Alabama 2010-765, enacted new rules regarding from whom a candidate may receive funds and to whom a candidate may make contributions.

Additionally, Act 2013-311 revised a number of provisions relating to fundraising and contribution limits.

FUNDRAISING

1) Limitations on Campaign Committees

Act 2010-765 makes it unlawful for one candidate's campaign committee to contribute to another candidate's campaign. However, the act permits a transfer from one campaign committee to another campaign committee when the committees are for the same person. Act 2010-765 permits political action committees (PACs) to contribute to principal campaign committees. [§17-5-15(b)]

Act 2011-765 limits state and local campaign committees from receiving more than \$1,000 from a principal campaign committee of a federal candidate. [§17-5-15.1(a)]

2) Accepting and Spending Campaign Funds

The law states that a candidate may only accept campaign contributions for three purposes [§17-5-7(b)(1)-(4)], namely, to:

- ▶ Influence the outcome of an election.
- ▶ Pay off a campaign debt.
- ▶ Pay all expenses associated with an election challenge, including quo warranto challenges.

Campaign funds, including excess funds left after the election, may be spent only for the following purposes [§17-5-7(a) (1)-(6)]:

- ▶ Expenditures of the campaign.
- ▶ Expenditures that are reasonably related to performing the duties of the office held [does not include personal and legislative living expenses].
- ▶ Donations to the State General Fund, the Education Trust Fund or equivalent county or municipal funds.
- ▶ Donations to an organization to which a federal income tax deduction is permitted under subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of subsection (b) of Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or any other charitable, educational, or eleemosynary cause of Section 501 of Title 26 of the U.S. Code.
- ▶ Inaugural or transitional expenses. [Warning: the Ethics Act prohibits converting to personal use contributions from an inaugural or transitional fund (§36-25-6).]
- ▶ Donations to a legislative caucus organization registered with the Clerk of the House, Secretary of the Senate, or both in the case of a bicameral caucus which does not operate as a political action committee. [§17-5-5.1]

3) Use of Excess Campaign Funds While in Office

The FCPA permits a campaign committee, during a two-year period beginning on the day after each general election and ending on the day of the next regularly scheduled general election, to pay qualifying fees to a political party and give up to \$5,000 to the political party. The campaign committee can also pay the political party for any tickets to party functions, and state or local party dues. Campaign committees for independent candidates or write-in candidates can pay for similar expenses. [§17-5-7(d)]

FUNDRAISING PERIOD

Candidates may begin raising money 12 months prior to the elec-

tion in which they intend to be on the ballot [§17-5-7(b)(2)]. However, FCPA provision §17-5-7(b)(2) prohibits candidates for legislative and statewide offices from raising money while the Alabama Legislature is in session, except within 120 days of a primary, primary run-off, or general election. [§17-5-7(b)(2)] These restrictions do not apply to loans candidates make to their own committee. [§17-5-7(b)(2)]

The fundraising prohibition does not affect expenditures. State candidates may continue to spend campaign funds while the Alabama Legislature is in session.

The fundraising prohibition does not apply to candidates for county or city offices. They may continue raising money when the Legislature is in session.

CONTRIBUTION LIMITS

State law limits state and local campaign committees from receiving more than \$1,000 from principal campaign committee of a federal candidate. [§17-5-15.1(a)]

Act 2013-311 specifically repealed previous statutes that limited corporate contributions to \$500 per candidate per election. [§17-5-14(a)]

State law prohibits contributions, transfers of funds, or expenditures to any political action committee, 527 political organization, or private foundation, from any political action committee, 527 political organization, or private foundation, including a principal campaign committee. [§17-5-15(b)]

It also prohibits contributions from one campaign committee to another campaign committee, except where an individual is giving from his or her campaign committee for one office to his or her campaign committee for another office. [§17-5-15(b)]

CAMPAIGN DEBT

Candidates should take particular note that the FCPA limits the fundraising period to clear campaign debts up to 120 days after the election. They are limited to raising only up to the amount of the debt plus the entire amount of filing threshold for that office (i.e., \$1,000). [AG's Opinion 99-00090]

All contributions received after the election to retire any debt must be reported in the next regular report the campaign files:

“Under the FCPA, all contributions ... by candidates, their principal campaign committees, and other political committees are to be reported regardless of the time when the contributions are received.” [AG’s Opinion 96-00120]

BRIBES AND CORRUPT INFLUENCE

The FCPA prohibits a candidate or campaign finance committee from accepting, soliciting, or receiving a contribution as a bribe or for the intention of corruptly influencing the official actions of a public official or a candidate for public office. [§17-5-7(c)]

PENALTY

Any person who intentionally violates the section that governs how and when money can be raised [§17-5-7] is guilty, upon conviction, of a Class B felony. [§17-5-19(c)] A Class B felony carries a penalty of up to \$30,000 and/or not less than two and not more than 20 years imprisonment. [§§ 13A-5-6, 13A-5-11]

In general, the statute of limitations for a violation of the Fair Campaign Practices Act (Title 17, Chapter 5 of the Code of Alabama) is two years from the commission of the offense. However, the statute of limitations for a violation of §17-5-7 is 4 years. [§17-5-19(f)]

Violators can be prosecuted by either a district attorney or the attorney general. [§17-5-19(e)]

Chapter III

Campaign Advertising

The FCPA specifies that campaign advertising and electioneering communication appearing in print, broadcast, and electronic media must clearly and distinctly identify the entity responsible for paying for the advertisement or electioneering communication. [§17-5-12(a)]

Campaign literature and advertisements must carry this information and broadcast materials must be identified at the beginning, during, or the end of the radio or television spot. [§17-5-12(a)]

Act 2011-697 created the definition of “electioneering communication”. Electioneering communication involves any of the following types of communication:

- 1) Any communication circulated through federally regulated broadcast media;
- 2) Any mailing or other distribution;
- 3) Any electronic communication;
- 4) Any phone bank; or
- 5) Any publication [§17-5-2(a)(5)]

These types of communication must also fulfill all of the four (4) following elements in order for it to meet the “electioneering communication” definition.

- 1) It must contain the name or image of a candidate;
- 2) It is made within 120 days of an election in which the candidate’s name appears on the ballot;
- 3) The only reasonable conclusion from the presentation and content of the communication is that it is intended to influence the outcome of the election; and
- 4) The expenditure exceeds one thousand dollars (\$1,000). [§17-5-2(a)(5)]

DISCLOSURE REPORTS FOR ELECTIONEERING COMMUNICATION

Any person, including candidates, who spends more than \$1,000 on an “electioneering communication” is required to file a disclosure report. The reports must identify the source or sources of the funds used for the electioneering communication and the recipients of expenditures related to the electioneering communication. [§17-5-8(h)]

DISCLAIMER

The FCPA does not give a specific format for wording the disclaimer. However, the FCPA does state that political advertisements or electioneering communication must clearly and distinctly identify the entity responsible for paying for the advertisement or electioneering communication. The disclaimer must also be displayed on printed advertisements. Disclaimers for broadcasts must occur at the beginning, during, or end of a radio or television spot, stating that the communication was a paid advertisement and identifying the paying entity. [§17-5-12(a)]

Such words as paid advertisement by, paid for by, and paid political ad meet the requirements of the act; however, an advertiser is not limited to just those phrases. The attorney general has advised that:

“...words which indicate that the advertisement is a paid political advertisement meet the requirements of the law.”
[AG’s Opinion 94-00227]

In addition, the disclaimer must contain the identification of the person, nonprofit corporation, principal campaign committee, or entity placing the ad. Under the FCPA, the term identification means full name and complete address [§17-5-2(a)(7)]. The attorney general has stated that a complete address includes the street or post office box, city, and state. [AG’s Opinion 94-00227]

EXCEPTIONS

- 1) Act of Alabama 2011-697 lists nine (9) types of paid political



Figure 1: Example of a political ad with a disclaimer.

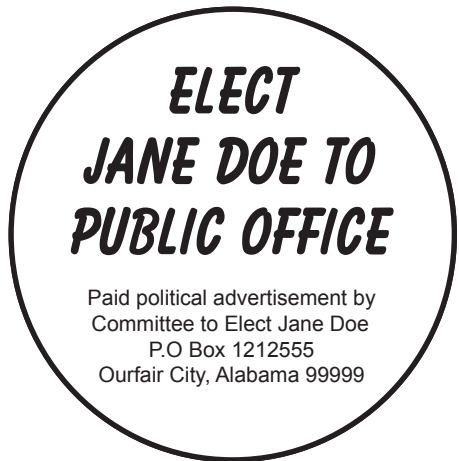


Figure 2: Example of a political ad with a disclaimer.

advertisements and electioneering communications that are excluded from the identification requirement. The disclaimer requirements do not apply if the advertisement is:

- a) Designed to be worn by a person; [§17-5-12(b)(1)]
- b) Placed as a paid link on an Internet website, if the message does not exceed 200 characters in length, and the link directs to another Internet website that has a disclaimer;

[§17-5-12(b)(2)]

- c) Placed as a graphic or picture link where a disclaimer is not practical due to the size of the picture, and the link directs to another Internet website that has a disclaimer; [§17-5-12(b)(3)]
 - d) Placed at no cost on an Internet website where there is no cost to post content for public users; [§17-5-12(b)(4)]
 - e) Placed on an unpaid profile account available to the public without charge or a social networking Internet website if the source of the message is obvious from the content or format of the message; [§17-5-12(b)(5)]
 - f) Distributed as a text message or other message via Short Messages Service if the message does not exceed 200 characters in length or requires the recipient sign up or opt in to receive it; [§17-5-12(b)(6)]
 - g) Connected with or included in software application where the user actively chooses to access the application from or through a website that has a disclaimer; [§17-5-12(b)(7)]
 - h) Sent by a third-party from or through a campaign website that has a disclaimer; [§17-5-12(b)(8)]
 - i) Contained in or distributed through any other form of technology where a disclaimer is not practical due its size or nature. [§17-5-12(b)(9)]
- 2) *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission*, 514 U.S. 334 (1995)

A U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission* seems to provide one very limited exception for advertising identification. In that case, the court upheld the right of an individual to distribute anonymous leaflets opposing a proposed school tax levy. The impact on the FCPA disclaimer requirements, however, is minimal. Alabama's Attorney General has written that the ruling:

"...is limited to individuals who distribute anonymous

written material (particularly leaflets) in a non-candidate election.” [AG’s Opinion 95-00218]

In all other circumstances, the advertising must carry identification.

APPLICATION

The advertising disclaimer must be on all types of non-excluded advertising, such as billboards, yard signs, bumper stickers, and pencils.

ROBOCALL DISCLOSURE

Every automated or pre-recorded communication made through an automated telephone dialing service (often referred to as a robocall) must contain a clear notice at the end of the communication stating that it is a paid political advertisement and identifying the person or other entity that paid for the communication. [§17-5-16(b)]

PENALTY

The Attorney General or a district attorney may prosecute any person who violates the FCPA.[§17-5-19(e)] Failure to comply with the advertising requirements is a Class A misdemeanor and, upon conviction, is subject to a fine of not more than \$6,000 and/or imprisonment of not more than one year. [§ 13A-5-12; §17-5-19(a)]

CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING AT THE POLLING PLACE

The FCPA requires that all campaign advertising must be clearly marked. Another section of law, §17-9-50, prohibits anyone from campaigning within 30 feet of the polling place. Generally, that distance is interpreted as 30 feet from the door of the polling place. [AG’s Opinion 82-00113]

Candidates frequently ask if supporters may wear campaign T-shirts or buttons when they go to the polling place to vote or when campaign workers are asked to accompany a voter who has requested assistance. AG’s Opinion 93-00118 states that there is no provision that specifically prohibits an elector from wearing campaign buttons, badges, or T-shirts while inside the polling place to vote or assist another voter.

Also, nothing prohibits a voter from taking a sample ballot into the polling place, but a sample ballot should not be left in the polling place.

It should be noted that poll watchers, who can be appointed by the candidate or a political party, are prohibited from campaigning while inside the polling place, and the attorney general has held that wearing buttons, badges, or T-shirts suggests, either directly or indirectly, how a citizen should vote and therefore, constitutes campaigning. [AG's Opinions 93-00118 and 84-00020]

OTHER SELECTED SECTIONS OF THE CODE OF ALABAMA OF INTEREST TO CANDIDATES

MISCELLANEOUS OFFENSES SECTIONS 17-17-36 THROUGH 17-17-45

This section of law prohibits such illegal voting as casting more than one ballot for the same office or knowingly attempting to vote when not entitled to do so.

Citizens are prohibited from bribing or attempting to influence voters, buying or selling votes, altering or changing the vote of an elector, or disturbing an elector on election day.

A candidate convicted of bribing or attempting to influence a voter is not allowed to hold the office to which he or she was elected for that term.

RIGHTS OF CITY, COUNTY, STATE EMPLOYEES SECTION 17-1-4

City, county, and state employees have the right to participate in city, county, or state political activities to the same extent as other citizens of the state, including endorsing candidates and contributing to campaigns. City, county, and state employees also have the right to join local political clubs and organizations and state and national political parties. They may also publicly support issues of public welfare.

***IMPROPER USE OF STATE PROPERTY, TIME, ETC. FOR
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
SECTION 17-17-5***

No state, county, or city employee shall use public funds, property, or time, for any political activity.

It is unlawful for any officer or public employee to solicit any type of political campaign contributions from other employees who work for the officer or employee in a subordinate capacity.

It is unlawful for an officer or public employee to coerce or attempt to coerce a subordinate employee to work in a political campaign or cause.

***USE OF STATE-OWNED PROPERTY
SECTIONS 36-12-60 THROUGH 64***

It is unlawful for any state officer or employee to use or to permit to be used any state-owned property including stationery, stamps, office equipment, office supplies, or automobiles for political activity.

State employees are also prohibited from transporting campaign literature in either a state vehicle or in a private vehicle while mileage is being paid for by the state.

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Chapter IV

Frequently Asked Questions

The Elections Division receives many questions from candidates regarding the FCPA and how it relates to a particular situation or set of circumstances. The following is a discussion of some of those questions that are asked most frequently.

Should you have a question that is not addressed in this section, please contact the Elections Division for further assistance.

What is the difference between a “state office” and a “statewide office?”

The term “state office” refers to any elected position that is an official in Alabama *state government*. The term includes constitutional officers, legislative members, state school board members, and circuit and district judges, to name a few. The term does not include those positions in *county or municipal government*, such as county commissioner, county school board member, mayor or city council member.

The term “statewide office” refers to any state office that is elected in a statewide vote, such as governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, treasurer, and attorney general, to name a few.

“Statewide office” does not include any state offices that are elected by district, such as members of the Legislature, circuit or district judges, or state school board members.

I am a candidate and have met the filing threshold for the office I want to hold. However, I do not have any opposition in my election. Do I have to file a campaign finance report?

Yes. In 2009, the Alabama Legislature amended the FCPA to require all candidates who have reached the filing threshold to file all campaign finance reports, even if the candidate has no opposition. See page 43 for additional information.

Must I set up a separate bank account for my principal campaign committee?

Yes. The FCPA specifies that principal campaign committee funds

must be segregated and that there can be no commingling of personal funds with campaign funds. [§17-5-6]

Am I allowed to campaign before I qualify for candidacy for an office?

Alabama's elections laws do not place a restriction on when a candidate can begin campaigning for office. As a practical matter, the FCPA provides that a campaign can raise or receive funds only for a period of twelve (12) months prior to an election. This restriction does not apply to a loan from a candidate to his or her own campaign committee. [§17-5-7(b)(2)]

I am running for a federal office. Do I have to report under the FCPA?

No. Alabama participates in the FEC State Filing Waiver program that waives the requirement that campaign finance reports filed with the FEC also be filed with the state election office, provided that the state has an adequate system to serve the public with electronic access to, and duplication of, reports and statements.

Do I have to keep receipts for the expenditures made during the campaign?

Yes. The FCPA states that the political committee treasurer must keep a receipted bill or canceled check for every expenditure greater than \$100 and for expenditures of \$100 or less, if the aggregate amount of such expenditures to the same person during a calendar year is greater than \$100. The receipts should be kept for a period of two years from the date of the expenditure.

I charge many of my campaign expenses on a credit card. Can I itemize only the total amount I pay to the credit card company?

No. The FCPA requires itemization and identification (full name and complete address) of:

each person to whom expenditures have been made . . . within the calendar year in an aggregate amount greater than \$100.00, the amount, date and purpose of each expenditure . . . [§17-5-8(c)(7)]

This issue is also addressed in AG's Opinion 95-00132 that says:

Several expenditures should be not lumped together under a general heading of credit card expenses.

If a candidate could legally enter only the name and full identification of the credit card company, many expenditures of more than \$100 could be hidden.

Do I have to file an APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE form even if I do not reach the campaign finance contribution/expenditure threshold of \$1,000?

Yes. All candidates must file an APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE form within five days of qualifying (with a political party or as an independent candidate) or within five days of reaching the campaign finance contribution/expenditure threshold.

I received an unwanted, unsolicited check from a PAC, and I returned it. Must I report that as a contribution?

Act 2013-311 specifically amended the FCPA to authorize the return or refund of any lawful campaign contribution. A refund is permitted so long as the original contribution was reported in an itemized manner and the refund is also itemized in a report. [§17-5-7.1(a)] If the contribution is not deposited in the committee's bank account, it may be returned without any reporting requirement. The new provision requires candidates or PACs to refund or return any unlawful contribution within 10 days of receipt. [§17-5-7.1(b)]

Does the FCPA require that I put the address of my political committee on a campaign button?

Probably not. §17-5-12(b)(1) provides that disclaimer requirements do not apply if the advertisement is designed to be worn by a person. If the campaign button is designed to be worn by a person, a disclaimer is not required.

Is there any prohibition against my borrowing money from my campaign account, provided that I pay back the

money plus the prevailing rate of interest?

The Ethics Act states in §36-25-6:

*Contributions to an office holder, a candidate, or to a public official's inaugural or transitional fund **shall not be converted to personal use.***

The Office of Secretary of State further believes that such action is also prohibited by these sections:

§17-5-7(b)(1) of the FCPA —

*. . . a candidate, public official, or principal campaign committee may only accept, solicit, or receive contributions: **to influence the outcome of an election.***

§36-25-5(a) of the Ethics Act —

No public official or public employee shall use or cause to be used his or her official position or office to obtain personal gain for himself or herself, or family member of the public employee or family member of the public official, or any business with which the person is associated unless the use and gain are otherwise specifically authorized by law. Personal gain is achieved when the public official, public employee, or a family member thereof receives, obtains, exerts control over, or otherwise converts to personal use the object constituting such personal gain.

§17-5-7(a) of the FCPA —

...A candidate, public official, or treasurer of principal campaign committee... may only use contributions, and any proceeds from investing the contributions that are in excess of any amount necessary to defray expenditures of the candidates, public official, or principal campaign committee, for the following purposes:

- (1) Necessary and ordinary expenditures of the campaign.
- (2) Expenditures that are reasonably related to performing the duties of the office held ... (Does not include personal

and legislative living expenses.)

- (3) Donations to the State General Fund, the Education Trust Fund or equivalent county or municipal funds.
- (4) Donations to an organization to which a federal income tax deduction is permitted under subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of subsection (b) of Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or any other charitable, educational, or eleemosynary cause of Section 501 of Title 26 of the U.S. Code.
- (5) Inaugural or transitional expenses incurred after October 1, 1995.
- (6) Donations to a legislative caucus.

Does a write-in candidate have to comply with the FCPA?

Yes, if the candidate has received contributions or made expenditures with a view toward bringing about his or her election. As with other candidates, the contributions or expenditures must reach the filing threshold of \$1,000 to trigger the reporting requirements. [AG's Opinion 91-0084]

I have several groups, such as the Young Republicans or the Democratic Women, who want to work in my campaign. May I use campaign funds to donate to a group in return for its members help?

No. A candidate may not transfer campaign funds to any political action committee or 527 political organization, which generally covers most political groups except county and state parties, which are recognized as political action committees under the FCPA. [§17-5-15(b)] Candidates can only transfer funds to a political party, as a political action committee, within the restrictions of §17-5-7(d).

However, candidates are not prohibited from paying individuals directly who assist with the campaign.

I have several volunteers who work in my campaign. Must I assess a fair labor wage and report that as an in-kind contribution?

No. The FCPA lists in §17-5-2(a)(2)(b) several services that are not considered contributions including:

- ▶ Value of services provided by individuals who volunteer their time on behalf of a candidate.
- ▶ The use of real or personal property and the cost of invitations, food, or beverages, voluntarily provided by an individual to a candidate when the voluntary personal service is on the individual's residential or business premises.
- ▶ Any unreimbursed payment for travel expenses made by an individual who volunteered on behalf of a candidate
- ▶ The amount spent by a state or local political party for the preparation, display, mailing, or other distribution of a printed slate card or sample ballot, or other printed listing of two or more candidates for any public office. [However, this exemption does not extend to the costs incurred by the committee when such a listing is placed on broadcasting stations, or in newspapers, magazines, or similar types of general public political advertising.
- ▶ The value or cost of polling data and voter preference data and information, if provided to a candidate or political committee, unless the information was compiled with the advance knowledge of and approval of the candidate or the political committee.

I am a member of the Alabama Legislature and am considering renting an apartment in Montgomery. Can I pay the rental expense from my campaign account?

No. The FCPA prohibits using campaign funds for personal or legislative living expenses. The Act lists such prohibited expenses as:

Household supplies, personal clothing, tuition payments, mortgage, rent, or utility payments for a personal residence; admission to an entertainment event or fees for a country club or social club, unless tied to a specific campaign event or functions involving constituents; and any other expense,

excluding food and beverages, that would exist irrespective of the candidate's campaign or duties as a legislator. Personal and legislative living expenses shall not include expenses for food, beverages, travel, or communication incurred by the legislator in the performance of the office held. [§17-5-2(a) (11)]

Can I pass out campaign materials on private property, such as an apartment complex, if there is a “no soliciting” sign?

That's a question that must be addressed with the property owner. Any enforcement of “no soliciting” would be between the owner and an individual who wishes to campaign. *[AG's Opinion 96-00306]*

Is it legal to pass out sample ballots at the polling place?

Yes, provided that those handing out the sample ballots are at least 30 feet from the door of the polling place. Also, those individuals distributing sample ballots should not in any manner attempt to intimidate or harass voters. Voters may take marked sample ballots into the polling place for personal use but should not leave them in the polling place.

May a candidate assist a voter?

Yes. Under the *Harris v. Siegelman* federal court order, a voter may request assistance from anyone other than those persons prohibited by federal law. Federal law prohibits assistance from the voter's employer or an agent of the employer or from an officer or agent of the voter's union. §17-9-13 was revised to incorporate this language and bring the text of this section into compliance with the terms of *Harris v. Siegelman*.

However, candidates should note that they may assist only if the voter requests the help. The voter is then required to sign the poll list in a designated column showing that assistance is requested, and the candidate must also sign the poll list.

Can citizens use video cameras at the polling place?

No. The United States Department of Justice wrote the following to the state prior to the 1994 general election:

We have found that no useful information is obtained, and federal law is likely to be violated, when private citizens form “ballot security” forces and attempt to take over the role of policing polling places. While this type of action often is proffered in the guise of helping law enforcement officials, the filming at or near the polls achieves nothing of the kind. Instead, we have found that such action intimidates lawful voters and interjects an element of fear into the process by which our republican form of government is guaranteed to our citizens.

Instead, citizens or poll watchers who believe election violations are occurring at the polling place should immediately notify either the local sheriff, local district attorney or the attorney general’s office.

Chapter V

Elected Officials

The Secretary of State congratulates each candidate who wins his or her election! Before getting immersed in the details of the job, each elected official should take a few minutes to note the information in this chapter.

COMMISSIONS

All state officials must be commissioned by the Secretary of State and Governor before assuming office. County officials who meet certain requirements may also receive commissions.

The law dictates what documents must be filed and where for obtaining a commission. Generally, an elected official must file an oath and/or a bond at the state or county level, depending upon the office. County officials must also have a certification from their probate judge. The law requires the Office of the Secretary of State to charge everyone a \$5.00 commissioning fee.

Information packets providing the specific requirements for each office are available from the Government Services Division in the Office of the Secretary of State.

FILING REQUIREMENTS

FCPA

All elected officials must file an ANNUAL REPORT by January 31 each year, even if they have had no activity and even if they have dissolved their campaign finance committee. Remember, an ANNUAL REPORT is due not just for the year you are elected but for every year you are in office.

STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS

All elected officials must file a STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS with the Ethics Commission every year by April 30. For more information, contact the State Ethics Commission, 334-242-2997.

JUDICIAL REPORTS

Judges have additional requirements and should consult Canons 6C and 7 of the Canons of Judicial Ethics relating to filing requirements and campaign conduct in general.

A report required by §12-24-2(a) is described here, since it is filed with the Office of Secretary of State:

Any justice or judge of an appellate or circuit court of this state shall file, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of his or her term of office, with the Secretary of State, a statement disclosing the names and addresses of campaign contributors and the amount of each contribution made to him or her in the election immediately preceding his or her new term of office. Contributions from political action committees may be accepted if the committee furnishes to the Secretary of State according to existing law a list of names and addresses of contributors and an amount properly attributable to each contributor. When a judge or justice does not file this annual statement, the Secretary of State shall notify the Administrative Office of Courts and that office shall withhold further compensation to the justice or judge pending compliance with this section. [§12-24-2(a)]

The Office of Secretary of State will accept an FCPA ANNUAL REPORT as fulfilling this requirement, provided the report is filed at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the term of office as required by §12-24-2(a).

The Secretary of State's Office interprets the disclosure requirements of §12-24-2(a) to be the same as FCPA reporting requirements: that is, only contributions of more than \$100 must be listed. If a contributor gives several donations that total more than \$100, those contributions must be itemized. Also, all types of contributions — in-kind, receipts from other sources, etc. — must be listed. Of course, to comply with the FCPA requirements, judges must also include expenditures in the report, even though §12-24-2(a) does not mention them.

Appendix A

Independent Candidacy

Those not qualifying through a political party may obtain ballot access by submitting a petition on or before 5:00 PM on the date of the statewide primary election [§17-9-3(a)(3)]. In 2014, the statewide primary is scheduled for June 3rd.

The petition must contain the required number of signatures of registered voters in the jurisdiction in which ballot access is sought (i.e., statewide, countywide, district). The petition must be submitted to the Secretary of State, if seeking a state or federal office, or to the probate judge for a county office.

No qualifying fee is required.

SIGNATURES

FEDERAL CANDIDATES

A congressional candidate must submit a petition with enough signatures to meet or to exceed three percent of the qualified electors who cast ballots for the office of governor in the last general election for the district in which he/she is running [§17-9-3(a)(3)]. For the number of signatures needed in each district, call the Office of Secretary of State's Elections Division at (334) 242-7210. Candidates seeking a U.S. Senate seat would need the number of signatures for statewide candidacy.

STATE OR COUNTY CANDIDATES

The number of signatures on the petition must equal or exceed at least three percent of the qualified electors who cast ballots for the office of governor in the last General Election in the county, district, or other political subdivision for which he/she is seeking ballot access. For the number of signatures needed for a particular state office, call the Office of Secretary of State's Elections Division at (334) 242-7210. For the number of signatures needed for a particular county office, call the judge of probate in the county in which the office is located.

FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICES ACT

Independent candidates should be aware of their obligation to file an APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE form at the time they submit their petition or within five days of exceeding the monetary threshold amount set forth by the FCPA. Act 2013-311 established a uniform \$1,000 threshold amount for all candidates in all races throughout the state. (See CHAPTER I.)

ETHICS

Independent candidates must file a STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS with the appropriate election official simultaneously upon becoming a candidate. For information on filing the STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS, call the Alabama Ethics Commission at (334) 242-2997 or visit its web site at ethics.alabama.gov.

PETITION REQUIREMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

A sample petition is available from the Secretary of State's office. It may be downloaded from the web site www.sos.alabama.gov. The sample petition may be photocopied.

Each petition must include the following information:

- ▶ A Statement that includes the name of the independent candidate, the date of the general election for which ballot access is sought, and the name of the office sought, including district number, if applicable.
- ▶ Numbered pages.
- ▶ Requested information for each person signing, which includes: name, residential address, county of residence, city of residence (if applicable), voting place, date of birth and signature. A signature shall not be deemed invalid for lacking any portion of the requested information if the disclosed information is sufficient for determining the validity of the signature.

The following are suggestions for the petition:

- ▶ Have the voter sign in ink and write legibly.
- ▶ Obtain signatures in excess of required number, as some

signatures may not be valid or identifiable.

- ▶ Keep a copy of the petition.

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Appendix B

Changes in Law

ACT OF ALABAMA 2009-751

In the 2009 session, the Alabama Legislature approved Senate Bill 205. The bill was signed by Governor Bob Riley on May 22, 2009, and subsequently assigned act number 2009-751. The new law was precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on November 16, 2009.

Act 2009-751 requires a candidate participating in an election to file all scheduled campaign finance reports once the candidate meets the filing threshold for the office for which he or she is running, even if the candidate has no opposition in the pending election. (See page 5 for more information on filing thresholds.)

Under Act 2009-751, if you are a candidate and have reached the filing threshold for the office you are seeking, you must file all campaign finance reports even if you have no opposition in your primary, special or general election.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2010-765

In the 2010 special session, the Alabama legislature approved House Bill 9. The bill was signed by Governor Bob Riley on December 20, 2010 and subsequently assigned act number 2010-765.

Act 2010-765 bans any PAC, 527 organization, or private foundation from contributing to any other PAC, 527 organization, or private foundation. Act 2010-765 also makes it unlawful for principal campaign committees to contribute to any other principal campaign committee. However, the act permits a transfer from one principal campaign committee to another principal campaign committee when committees are for the same person. Act 2010-765 permits PACs to contribute to principal campaign committees.

Act 2010-765 limits state and local campaign committees from receiving more than \$1,000 from a principle campaign committee of a federal candidate..

Act 2010-765 permits a principal campaign committee, while the candidate is in office, to pay qualifying fees to a political party.

Additionally, the principal campaign committee may pay dues to a political party and purchase tickets to political party functions or dinners, up to a maximum of \$5,000. Campaign committees for independent candidates or write-in candidates can pay for similar expenses.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2011-566

In the 2011 session, the Alabama legislature approved House Bill 425. The bill was signed by Governor Robert Bentley on June 9, 2011 and subsequently assigned act number 2011-566. The new law was precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on August 22, 2011.

Act 2011-566 affects the dates of the presidential preference primary and the statewide primary elections. The presidential preference primary will now be held on the second Tuesday in March in which a President is to be elected beginning in 2012. The statewide primary will be conducted on the second Tuesday in March in the years in which a presidential primary is held. Statewide primaries will be held on the first Tuesday in June on the years in which there is no presidential preference primary.

The presidential delegates will also be elected in the presidential preference primary election. The change in the date for the presidential preference primary eliminates the early voting procedures that were once necessary to accommodate the counties celebrating Mardi Gras.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2011-687

In the 2011 session, the Alabama legislature approved Senate Bill 136. The bill was signed by Governor Robert Bentley on June 14, 2011 and subsequently assigned act number 2011-687. The new law was precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on September 26, 2011.

Act 2011-687 changes the timing of filing FCPA campaign finance disclosure forms. The act eliminates the 50/45 day and 10/5 day pre-election disclosure reports. It replaces them with periodic finance disclosure reports. The act requires monthly disclosure reports beginning 12 months prior to the election. Monthly reports are due on the last day of each month. Act 2011-687 also requires weekly

reports beginning on the month prior to the election. The weekly reports are due on the Friday of each week.

Beginning on the 8th day prior to the election, Act 2011-687 also requires daily reports for principal campaign committees and PACs that receive or spend \$5,000 or more on any day with a view toward influencing the election. Once a principal campaign committee or PAC meets this daily amount, it must file daily reports up until the election date. Daily reports do not apply to elections involving county and city offices. Candidates for circuit and district offices are also exempt from daily reporting.

Principal campaign committees and PACs must disclose the receipt of any single contribution of \$20,000 or more within 2 business days of receiving the contribution if it is not included in a monthly, weekly, or daily report.

Principal campaign committees and PACs must close their books 2 days prior to the specified reporting dates in order to complete the reports

Act 2011-687 mandates electronic filing of disclosure reports beginning in the 2014 election cycle.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2011-697

In the 2011 session, the Alabama legislature approved Senate Bill 284. The bill was signed by Governor Robert Bentley on June 14, 2011 and subsequently assigned act number 2011-697. The new law was precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on September 26, 2011.

Act 2011-697 provides that all paid political advertisements and “electioneering communications” appearing in print media or broadcast must clearly and distinctly identify the entity responsible for paying for the political advertisements and electioneering communication. Act 2011-697 defines the new “electioneering communications” term. The act also lists 9 types of paid political advertisements and electioneering communications that are excluded from the identification requirement.

Act 2011-697 eliminates the requirement notice on the front page of printed campaign literature. Instead, the act requires that

printed political advertisements and electioneering communication must have a clear and unmistakable identification of the entity responsible for directly paying for the advertisements or electioneering communication. For paid broadcasts, Act 2011-697 gives the paying person or entity the option of placing an identification statement on the broadcast at the beginning, during, or at the end of the radio or television spot.

Act 2011-697 requires any person or entity, including candidates, that spends more than \$1,000 on an electioneering communication to file disclosure reports. The reports must identify the source or sources of the funds used for the electioneering communication and the recipients of expenditures related to the electioneering communication. However, the candidate is not required to duplicate any reporting.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2012-173

In the 2012 session, the Alabama Legislature approved Senate bill 133. The bill was signed by Governor Robert Bentley on April 2, 2012 and was subsequently assigned act number 2012-173. The new law was precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on May 30, 2012.

Act 2012-173 amends the Code of Alabama, 17-8-1 to authorize the appointment of alternate election officials including additional inspectors and clerks to serve if an appointed inspector or clerk is unable to perform his or her duties.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2012-461

In the 2012 session, the Alabama Legislature approved Senate Bill 11. The bill was signed by Governor Robert Bentley on May 15, 2012 and was subsequently assigned act number 2012-461. The new law was precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on August 17, 2012.

Act 2012-461 adds a provision to 17-5-16 to require that all campaign-related automated or pre-recorded telephone calls contain a clear notice at the end of the call that the communication was a paid political advertisement and to clearly identify the entity that

paid for the call.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2012-477

In the 2012 session, the Alabama Legislature approved Senate Bill 497. The bill was signed by Governor Robert Bentley on May 15, 2012 and was subsequently assigned act number 2012-477. The new law was precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on February 6, 2013.

Act 2012-477 changes the timing of filing FCPA campaign disclosure reports to standardize the monthly and weekly periods for candidates and PACs and to eliminate certain duplicate filings during an election cycle.

ACT OF ALABAMA 2013-311

In the 2013 session, the Alabama Legislature approved Senate Bill 445. The bill was signed by Governor Robert Bentley on May 23, 2013 and was subsequently assigned act number 2012-311. The new law was returned by the U.S. Department of Justice in July 2013 as not needing preclearance under the holding of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*. The effective date of the act was August 1, 2013.

This act repeals the corporate campaign contribution limit, authorizes candidates and PACs to appoint designated filing agents, institutes a progressive administrative fine system for failing to comply with the act, clarifies which duplicate reports were removed from the reporting schedule, and makes certain editorial changes throughout the act.

NOTES
