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COOK COUNTY CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAW

Section 2-585 of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance limits political campaign contributions to candidates for any elected Cook County government office, as well as political campaign contributions to elected County officials. This guide provides an explanation of the provisions of the Ordinance that relate specifically to campaign finance.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE ORDINANCE?

CONTRIBUTORS:

Any individual entity, corporation, partnership, firm, association, union, trust or estate that has “done business” or is “doing business” with the County within the preceding four years, or is seeking to do business with the County or is a registered lobbyist with the County.*

Any firm, or its officers, directors or partners, contracted by the County to provide financial audits of county finances are prohibited from making campaign contributions to any county official or candidate for county office.

Any firm, or its officers, directors or partners, contracted by the County to provide financial counsel, bond counsel, underwriter’s counsel, legal counsel, or financial manager for the issuance of any bond is prohibited from making campaign contributions to any county official or candidate for county office.

“Done business” or “doing business” means any combination of sales, purchases, leases or contracts to, from or with the County worth more than \$10,000 in any twelve consecutive months; and

“Seeking to do business” means taking action within the past six months to obtain a contract or business with the County when, if such action were successful, it would result in the person doing business with the County.

*Nothing prohibits an employee, officer, director or partner from making a political contribution for which he is not reimbursed by a person with whom he or she is affiliated, even if that person has made the maximum contribution allowed under the Ordinance.

CANDIDATES AND ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Any person who has filed a declaration of candidacy for elected County office or a petition to appear on a ballot for County election;

Any person who has raised or expended money in personal pursuit of elected County office;

All elected Cook County officials regardless of any non-federal elected office they are seeking; and

All elected County officials during any non-election year of their term.

Any local, state, or federal campaign committee that is controlled by, or established in support of, a candidate for County office or an elected County official.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS ON CONTRIBUTIONS?

NON-ELECTION YEAR:

\$750.00 per elected Cook County official; and

\$750.00 per candidate for election to Cook County office.

ELECTION YEAR:

\$750.00 per candidate per candidacy (**with the primary election and general election being separate candidacies**),

Primary Election: **\$750.00** from January 1st to the primary election day; and

General Election: **\$750.00** from the day after the primary election day until December 31st.

Total contributions, per candidate, may not exceed **\$1,500.00** in the course of a year in which a candidacy occurs; and

A year for the purposes of the Ordinance is a calendar year January 1 through December 31.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I RECEIVE AN IMPROPER CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION?

Request a return of the campaign contribution from the official or candidate in excess of the amount proscribed by the Ordinance immediately.

WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE ORDINANCE?

Persons doing business with the County who knowingly violate the campaign finance provisions of the Ordinance may have their contracts with the County voided.

Any candidate for any county office, or any current elected official in County government who fail to return contributions in excess of the limitations within 30 days of notification from the Board of Ethics shall be subject to fines.

Any questions regarding campaign contributions should be addressed to the Cook County Board of Ethics. Copies of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance are available online at www.cookcountygov.com (follow links to Board of Ethics page) or by request to the Board of Ethics, 69 West Washington Street, Suite 3040, Chicago, Illinois, 60602, (312) 603-4304.