

Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance Guide

CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAW CHANGES: A TIMELINE

OCPF was established in 1973 and administers MGL Chapter 55, the campaign finance law. Since that time, the law has been revised several times. For historical purposes, the following is a timeline of changes to the law from the most recent until 1994. Contact OCPF for information on changes made prior to 1994.

2019

This law, implemented in 2020, moved more candidates and committees into the depository reporting system.

- All House and Senate candidates are required to enter the depository system, but with less frequent reporting requirements.
- All mayoral candidates enter the depository system of reporting.
- Depository candidates, other than House and Senate, report monthly, rather than twice-monthly.
- Depository bank reports report monthly, rather than twice-monthly.
- OCPF is directed to establish regulations concerning social media use by appointed public employees.
- [Click here](#) for a comprehensive summary of the law changes.

2018

Mayoral and city council candidates in cities with populations of 65,000 or more file in the depository system (reduced from 75,000).

2016

Minor changes were made to the campaign finance law concerning special elections and requiring committees to clearly identify the candidates they support.

- The contribution limit from an individual to a candidate was \$1,000 per calendar year, even for House and Senate candidates who were on the ballot in a special election in the same year as a regular general election. The change allows an individual to contribute up to \$1,000 for the special election, and up to \$1,000 during the period that begins on the day after the special election until Dec. 31.
- Billboards and direct mail are added to the list of advertisements that require the “top five contributors” to be listed for independent expenditures, electioneering communications and state ballot question committees.
- Local party committees are required to disclose the name and address, and elective office held/sought, for expenditures benefiting a candidate.
- State parties and PACs must clearly identify candidates they support on campaign finance reports.
- [Click here](#) for a comprehensive summary of the law changes.

2014

This change addressed independent expenditure political action committees, and transitioned more candidate types into the depository system of reporting.

- Creation of a special independent expenditure political action committee reporting schedule.
- All mayors file with OCPF electronically, regardless of population size. Mayoral candidates in cities with populations of 75,000 or less e-file in the non-depository system.
- Mayoral candidates in cities with populations of 75,000 to 100,000 entered the depository system of reporting.
- PACs moved into the depository system of reporting.
- Special depository checks were eliminated.
- The depository reporting system changed to require twice-monthly reporting. Previously, the reports were filed monthly, and twice-monthly during the last six months of an election year.
- Depository committees are permitted to use debit cards attached to their campaign accounts.

- All committees, even on the local level, are required to file sub-vendor reports.
- Limits for all candidates increase to \$1,000 per calendar year from individuals, up from \$500.
- Money order limits increase from \$50 annually to \$100.
- A new section of the law is created to require “top contributors” on some advertisements (Section 18G).
- [Click here](#) for a comprehensive summary of the law changes.

2009

Major revisions were made to the campaign finance law in 2009, and implemented in 2010.

- Requirement for House and Senate candidates to file a mid-year report in non-election years.
- Late contribution reports were created.
- Starting in 2010, OCPF could refer cases to the Attorney General for up to three years after a relevant election. The law previously had a two-year window. The change also allowed OCPF to refer cases to the AG before an election, if done prior to 120 days before the election. Before the change, OCPF was not permitted to refer a case to the AG before an election.
- Sub-vendor reports were created.
- Creation of inauguration, recount and legal accounts.
- Fines for late reports increased from \$10 per day to \$25 per day.
- A person is prohibited from signing a committee check to himself or herself.
- The ban on corporate contributions expanded to include LLCs, LLPs and partnerships.
- District and ward city council candidates in cities with populations of more than 100,000 file electronically in the depository system with OCPF, rather than on paper with local election officials.
- Disclosure of electioneering communications was required.
- Mayoral candidates in cities with populations between 40,000 and 100,000 e-file with OCPF.
- Local election officials are required to scan and post campaign finance reports to their municipal websites.
- [Click here](#) for comprehensive summary of the law changes.

1994

Legislation passed in 1994 was implemented in 1995. [Click here](#) for a summary of the changes.

- Annual contribution limit from an individual to a candidate was reduced from \$1,000 to \$500.
- Contributions by money order were capped at \$50.
- Banks handling the accounts of a mayor or other municipal candidates running citywide, other than school committee, must file a copy of the candidate’s reports with the election commission or city clerk.
- Citywide school committee candidates were excluded from the depository system.
- Year-end report due dates were changed from Jan. 10 to Jan. 20.

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