



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION
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First Quarter Update

Ethics – Gifts, Honorarium, Travel and Use of Campaign Funds

Regulations adopted by the Commission

The following are regulatory changes approved by the Commission during the past quarter concerning gifts, honorarium, travel, and use of campaign funds. To receive updates for all regulations before the Commission, please sign up for our [mailing list here](#).

None.

Advice Letters

The following are advice letters issued by the Commission's Legal Division during the past quarter concerning questions about gifts, honorarium, travel, and use of campaign funds. To receive the monthly report with all advice letters issued, please sign up for our [mailing list here](#).

not used for a political purpose.

None.

Commission Opinions

None.

Enforcement Matters

The following are summaries of significant enforcement actions approved by the Commission in the past quarter concerning gifts, honorarium, travel, and use of campaign funds. To receive a monthly report of all enforcement actions, please sign up for our [mailing list here](#).

Misuse of Campaign Funds

In the Matter of Friends of John McMahon for SB County Sheriff-Coroner 2018, John McMahon, and Marvin Reiter; FPPC No. 19/1800. Staff: Theresa Gilbertson, Senior Commission Counsel and Lance Hachigian, Special Investigator. This matter arose from an audit performed by the Audit Division of the Fair Political Practices Commission. McMahon was a successful candidate for Sheriff-Coroner in the June 5, 2018 Primary Election. Friends of John McMahon for SB County Sheriff-Coroner 2018 was McMahon's candidate-controlled committee. Marvin Reiter was the treasurer. McMahon retired from office on July 15, 2021, and the remaining committee funds became surplus on October 14, 2021. However, the Committee, McMahon, and Reiter made several expenditures that were not consistent with the permissible uses of surplus funds, in violation of Government Code Section 89519 (1 count). **Fine: \$3,500.**

Legislation

AB 2631 (Mike Fong) – Local Ethics Training Program

Status: Introduced on 2/14/24

Short Summary: AB 2631 would require the FPPC to create, maintain, and make available a local agency ethics training course that satisfies certain requirements.

Detailed Summary:

Existing law: Existing law, passed in 2005, requires local agency officials to receive at least two hours of ethics training every two years, which includes training on the Political Reform Act. After passage of the bill adding this requirement, the FPPC voluntarily created a free online local ethics training course that would satisfy these training requirements.

Establishes a permanent program: The bill would codify a requirement that the FPPC, in consultation with the Attorney General, create, maintain, and make available to local agency officials an ethics training course that satisfies these training requirements, thereby making this a permanent program.

AB 2041 (Bonta) - Use of Campaign Funds for Security Expenses

Status: Referred to the Assembly Elections Committee on 2/12/24

Short Summary: AB 2041 would authorize a candidate or elected officer to use campaign funds for home or office security electronic security systems for, and for the reasonable costs of providing personal security to, the candidate, elected officer, or their immediate family or staff.

Detailed Summary:

Expansion to personal security expenses: Existing law allows campaign funds to be used for home or office electronic security systems under certain conditions. The bill would expand permitted campaign fund use to also include payments for the reasonable costs of providing personal security. The bill would specifically provide that the bill does not authorize campaign funds to be spent on firearms for these purposes.

Expansion to family and staff: Existing law allows campaign funds to be used only for electronic security systems at the home or office of the candidate or elected officer. The bill would allow campaign funds to be used additionally for home or office electronic security systems and personal security expenses for the immediate family or staff of the candidate or elected officer.

Repeal of verification requirement: Existing law allows campaign funds to be used for home or office security systems only if (1) the candidate or elected officer has received threats to their physical safety, (2) the threats arise from their activities, duties or status as a candidate or elected officer, and (3) the threats have been reported to and verified by law enforcement. The bill would repeal the verification requirements described in (1) and (3).

Repeal of \$5,000 limit: Existing law allows up to \$5,000 to be used for electronic security systems. The bill repeals that limit.

Return or reimbursement requirement: Existing law requires the candidate or elected officer to reimburse the campaign fund account for the costs of the security system upon sale of the property where the security equipment is installed, based on the fair market value of the security equipment at the time the property is sold. The bill instead requires either return of, or reimbursement for, the security system equipment and any other items within one year of the of when the official is no longer in office or the candidate is no longer a candidate for the office for which the security equipment was purchased, or, if applicable, upon sale of the property on which the security equipment is located, whichever occurs sooner. Return or reimbursement would be required for all security equipment and any other tangible items purchased with campaign funds.

Retains special reporting requirement: Existing law requires candidates or elected officers who use campaign funds for electronic security systems to report this expenditure to the Commission and information including when the threat was reported to law enforcement, the contact information of the law enforcement agency, and a description of the threat. The bill alters this special reporting requirement to require reporting to the Commission only of the expenditure, and additionally requires the candidate or elected official to report reimbursement for security equipment to the Commission.

AB 2803 (Valencia) – Use of Campaign Funds for Legal Defense: Criminal Convictions

Status: Introduced on 2/15/24

Short Summary: AB 2803 would prohibit expenditure of campaign funds for attorney’s fees, other legal defense costs, or any fine, penalty, judgment, or settlement relating to a conviction for a felony or an offense that involves moral turpitude, dishonesty, or fraud.

Detailed Summary:

Existing law; use of campaign funds for legal costs: Expenditure of campaign funds for attorney’s fees and other legal costs is permitted under certain conditions.

Existing law; contributions held in trust: Existing law provides that all contributions deposited into the campaign account shall be deemed to be held in trust for expenses associated with the election of the candidate or for expenses associated with holding office.

Existing law; political, legislative, or governmental purpose: Existing law requires expenditures that confer a substantial personal benefit to be directly related to a political, legislative, or governmental purpose. Legal fees and costs are directly related to a political, legislative, or governmental purpose if the litigation (1) is directly related to activities of a committee that are

consistent with its primary objectives or (2) arises directly out of a committee's activities or out of a candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer.

Prohibition on use of campaign funds associated with certain criminal convictions: The bill would further restrict campaign funds from being used to pay, or pay reimbursement for, a fine, penalty, judgment, or settlement relating to, or attorney's fees and other costs in connection with, criminal litigation if the litigation results in a conviction of the candidate or elected officer for a felony or an offense that involves moral turpitude, dishonesty, or fraud.

SB 1170 (Menjivar) - Use of campaign funds for mental health expenses

Status: Referred to the Senate Elections Committee

Short Summary: SB 1170 would authorize expenditure of campaign funds for mental healthcare expenses for non-incumbent candidates under limited circumstances.

Detailed Summary:

Existing law: Existing law prohibits expenditure of campaign funds for health-related expenses for a candidate, elected officer, or any individual or individuals with authority to approve the expenditure of campaign funds held by a committee, or members of their households.

Authorizing campaign funds use for mental healthcare expenses: The bill would authorize campaign funds to be used to pay or reimburse a non-incumbent candidate for reasonable and necessary mental healthcare expenses to address mental health issues that have arisen during the campaign or have been adversely impacted by campaign activities if the candidate does not have health insurance or has been denied coverage for these mental healthcare expenses by their health insurance.

Limited time period: Expenditures for mental healthcare expenses would be permitted from the date upon which a candidate committee is established to the date that the election results are certified.

Reporting: The bill would require these expenditures to be reported on campaign statements and would require the disclosures to note the underlying campaign-related circumstances or events that gave rise to the need for mental health expenses.

Mental healthcare expenses defined: Under the bill, "mental healthcare expenses" refers to expenses for services including therapy, psychological, or psychiatric counseling services, provided in a group or private setting, either virtually or in person, by a professional licensed by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, or an associate accruing the fee for such a license, to address mental health issues.

SB 1155 (Hurtado) - Postgovernment employment restriction for former heads of state administrative agencies

Status: Referred to the Senate Elections Committee

Short Summary: SB 1155 would, for a period of one year after leaving office, prohibit the head of a state administrative agency from lobbying the Legislature or a state administrative agency for compensation.

Detailed Summary:

Existing law; one-year ban: Existing law prohibits certain officials, for one year after leaving state service, from representing any other person by appearing before or communicating with, for compensation, their former agency in an attempt to influence agency decisions that involve the making of general rules (such as regulations or legislation), or to influence certain proceedings involving a permit, license, contract, or transaction involving the sale or purchase of property or goods.

Existing law; permanent ban: Existing law prohibits former state officials from working on proceedings that they participated in while working for the state.

New one-year ban on lobbying activity: The bill would prohibit the head of an agency, defined to mean an elected state officer or an appointed official, from engaging in any activity, for compensation, for the purposes of influencing legislative or administrative action by the Legislature or any state administrative agency that would require the individual to register as a lobbyist under the PRA.