CITY OF COLUMBUS CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFERENCE GUIDE

The City of Columbus Campaign Finance Laws applies to two different types of campaign filers:

- **Municipal Campaign Committees and Municipal Ballot Issue Committees** - All campaign committees of municipal candidates and municipal ballot issues must file regular reports of their contributions, expenditures, and debts. Many of the required campaign finance reports are required by state law. The City of Columbus Code requires the filing of additional campaign finance reports. All municipal campaign committee and municipal ballot issue committee campaign finance reports must be filed with **both** the Franklin County Board of Elections and the Columbus City Clerk's Office.

- **Election Period Communication Issuer** - Any issuer of an Election Period Communication (an independent public communication intended to influence electors to vote for or against a municipal candidate or ballot issue) must also file campaign finance reports disclosing information about the issuer of the communication, and the amount and source of any funds or credit that were used to pay any costs associated with the production and/or dissemination of the communication. These campaign finance reports must be filed with only with the Columbus City Clerk's Office.

Filers should pay close attention to ensure that they check all applicable code provisions. The guidance below serves solely as a general summary of the applicable rules.

Additionally, note that campaign finance reports filed with the Franklin County Board of Elections are paper only, while campaign finance reports filed with the Columbus City Clerk are electronic only. For your reference and convenience, the Columbus Campaign Finance Database offers a link to the Ohio Secretary of State's website with all campaign finance reports to be filed with the Franklin County Board of Elections. The majority of campaign finance filing forms used by the City of Columbus are from the Ohio Secretary of State.

Municipal Campaign Committee and Municipal Ballot Issue Committee Reports

Campaign finance report filing deadlines for municipal campaign committees and ballot issues committees (collectively referred to in this section as "committees") are based upon when the candidate or ballot issue appears on the ballot. For write-in candidates, the reports are based upon the election when the office for which the write-in candidate was certified to receive votes is on the ballot.

Columbus municipal officers (Mayor, City Council Member, City Auditor, and City Attorney) are only elected in odd-numbered years (2021, 2023, etc.). Under the Columbus City Charter, a primary election is not held when only two candidates are certified by the Franklin County Board of Elections to the ballot for the office to be elected that year at the general election. For city council members, no primary election is held when the number of candidates that are certified to the ballot is no more than two times the number of city

council members to be elected that year. For example, in a year when three city council members are to be elected, no primary election would be held if only six or less candidates are certified to the ballot. However, a primary election would have to be held if seven (7) or more candidates are certified to run in a year when three (3) city council members are to be elected at the general election.

Exemption from Filing Committee Reports Required by Columbus City Code

If a Committee's cumulative contributions, expenditures, and debt do not equal or exceed the monetary threshold of $1000, the Committee may either **(a)** file a Notice of Exemption from Filing pursuant to Columbus City Code Section 107.02(D)(6) for that period; or **(b)** file a standard campaign finance report. The Notice of Exemption from Filing must be filed for each reporting period that a committee is an active committee, if the monetary requirements are met. The Notice of Exemption from Filing is due no later than 4:00 p.m. on the Campaign Finance Report filing date specified in Columbus City Code Section 107.02(D)(2) for each applicable reporting period.

The Notice of Exemption from Filing is valid for one reporting period only, and must be filed for each reporting period that a municipal campaign committee or municipal ballot issue committee is an active committee. However, the cumulative amount of all contributions, expenditures, and debt not filed by using the Notice of Exemption from Filing form(s) must be subsequently reported on the next Post-Election Report or Annual Report as applicable. Any municipal campaign committee or municipal ballot issue committee that does not file this Notice must electronically file all applicable reports and filings outlined in Columbus City Code Sections 107.02(D) and (E).

Committee Reports Required by Columbus City Code

Columbus City Code Section 107.02(D) requires different campaign finance reports depending upon whether or not the candidate or the municipal ballot issue are on the ballot that year. As noted above, Columbus campaign finance reports are **in addition to** the campaign finance reports required by state law:

- Mid-Cycle/60 Day Report – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. of the 60th day before the primary, general, or special election when the candidate or municipal ballot issue appears on the ballot (or when a certified write-in candidate is eligible to receive write-in votes) to reflect contributions made or received and expenditures made from the close of business on the last day reflected in the most recent previously-filed statement (if any) through the close of business on the 68th day before the election. **2020 Filing Date: None required for the City of Columbus, since there will not be Columbus city elections for candidates.**
- April Quarterly Report – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. on the last business day of April every year, except those years when the candidate or municipal ballot issue appears on the ballot, to reflect contributions made or received and expenditures made from the close of business on the last day reflected in the most recent previously-filed campaign finance report (if any) through the close of business on the last day of March of that year. **2020 Filing Date: April 30, 2020**

- 5 Day Report – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. of the 5th day before the primary, general, or special election when the candidate or municipal ballot issue appears on the ballot (or when a certified write-in candidate is eligible to receive write-in votes) to reflect contributions made or received and expenditures made from the close of business on the 19th day before the election through the close of business on the 6th day before the election. **2020 Filing Date: None required for the City of Columbus**

- Semiannual Report - must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. on the last business day of July, except in a year in which the municipal campaign committee or municipal ballot issue committee was required to file a post-primary election report under Ohio Revised Code Section 3517.10(A)(2), to reflect contributions made or received and expenditures made since the last previously-filed statement through the last day of June of that year. **2020 Filing Date: July 31, 2020**

- October Quarterly Report – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. on the last business day of October every year, except those years when the candidate or municipal ballot issue appears on the ballot, to reflect contributions made or received and expenditures made from the close of business on the last day reflected in the most recent previously-filed campaign finance report (if any) through the close of business on the last day of September of that year. **2020 Filing Date: October 31, 2020**

Committee Reports Required by State Law

- Annual Report – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. on the last business day of January to reflect contributions received and expenditures made between the time period covered in the most recent previously-filed campaign finance report through December 31st of the prior year. However, the Annual Report is not required if a committee filed a Post-General Election Report. An Annual Report is required to be filed even if the committee had no contributions or expenditures for the reporting period. **2020 Filing Date: January 31, 2021**

- Semiannual Report – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. of the last business day of July to reflect all contributions received and expenditures made between the time period covered in the most recent previously-filed campaign finance report through June 30th. A Semiannual Report is not required if a campaign committee was required to file a Post-Primary Election Report. **2020 Filing Date: July 31, 2020**

- Pre-Primary, Pre-General, and Pre-Special Election Reports – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. of the 12th day before the election to reflect contributions received and expenditures made between the time period covered in the most recent previously-filed campaign finance report and the 20th day before the election. **2020 Filing Deadline: None required for the City of Columbus.**

    - NOTE: Even if a committee is exempt from filing a State Pre-Primary, Pre-General or Pre-Special Election report, the committee may still be required to file a City pre-election 5 Day Report, or may be eligible to file a Notice of Exemption from Filing (Form CCF-01).

- Post-Primary, Post-General, and Post-Special Election Reports – must be filed no later than 4:00 p.m. of the 38th day after the election when the candidate or ballot issue appeared on the ballot to reflect any contributions and expenditures not previously reported through the 31st day after the election. **2020 Filing Deadline: None required for the City of Columbus.**

- Designation of Treasurer – this form is considered a "registration" form for the campaign committee of a municipal candidate or municipal ballot issue and includes basic information such as the candidate's name and address, the campaign committee's name, the office sought and the name of the treasurer and any deputy treasurers. The candidate must either designate herself/himself or another person as the campaign committee treasurer. The candidate must, and the treasurer should, sign the Designation of Treasurer Form. Candidates are responsible for updating/amending this information as necessary by filing an updated Designation of Treasurer form with the Board of Elections and the Columbus City Clerk's Office. There is no specific deadline for filing a Designation of Treasurer or to file an updated version, but the form must be filed before the campaign committee receives any contributions or makes any expenditures.

- Termination - A campaign committee for a candidate or municipal ballot issue may terminate by filing a final campaign finance report with the Board of Elections and the Columbus City Clerk's Office. The campaign committee must have a zero balance, no outstanding debts, and no outstanding loans before it can terminate. When these criteria have been met, the campaign committee must file a final report. This report should list all activity, if any, that has occurred since the most recent previously-filed report. The termination box on the appropriate Secretary of State Form must also be marked when the committee wants to terminate. There is no separate form for terminating.

Election Period Communication Issuer Reports

An Election Period Communication is a communication intended to influence electors to vote for or against a municipal candidate or ballot issue that is publicly disseminated during the ninety (90) days before or on the day of an election.

An Election Period Communication Issuer means any person who issues, authorizes the issuance of, or causes to be issued an Election Period Communication.

Election Period Communication Reports Required by Columbus City Code

The issuer of an Election Period Communication must file an Election Period Communication Report (Form CCF-02) and a Supplemental Election Period Communication Report with the Columbus City Clerk's Office, if applicable (Form CCF-09) within forty-eight (48) hours (by 11:59 p.m.) from when the communication is first issued.

The Election Period Communication Report must contain the following information:

- Name(s) and contact information for the issuer (individual or business address) and any agent(s).
- Name(s) and contact information for any individual or entity that provided any funds, covered any costs, or extended any credit for the production and/or dissemination of the communication.
- Dates and amounts of each payment and description of item paid for.
- Name of each candidate or ballot issue to which the communication relates.

Additionally, an issuer that discloses any person making a monetary or in-kind contribution, or to whom debts are owed, equal to or exceeding an aggregated amount of one thousand ($1000) dollars, and is tax exempt under IRS section 501(c) or 527 or registered as a partnership, closely-held company, or limited liability company must also disclose any of the contributor's donors that provided funds or credit equal to or exceeding an aggregated amount of two hundred ($200) dollars for the purpose of influencing the results of the applicable election.

The Supplemental Election Period Communication Report must contain the following information:

- Name(s) and contact information for the issuer (individual or business address) and any agent(s).
- Subject of the Election Period Communication.
- Full name of Contributor.
- Name(s) and contact information for any Donor(s) to the Contributor
- Service Provided/Cost Paid/Credit Extended/Donation Made (As Applicable) by Donor(s)

Any issuer that is required to file a report under this section reflecting a debt shall file with the Columbus City Clerk's Office, a Contributions for Debt Retirement Report (Form 31-P) **each time a payment has been made on the debt**. Each report shall be filed no later than forty-eight (48) hours following the payment.

For more information on campaign finance reports, please see the following resources:

- City of Columbus Campaign Finance Handbook
- City of Columbus Campaign Finance FAQs
- Campaign Finance Handbook on the Ohio Secretary of State's website: http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/CampaignFinance/CFHandbook.aspx.