

## **EXPLANATION OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORT TYPES**

All campaign finance reports for the campaign committees of municipal candidates and municipal ballot issues as well as those of political action committees, political contributing entities, and political parties that make a contribution to or an expenditure in support of or in opposition to a municipal candidate or municipal ballot issue are required to file campaign finance reports with both the Franklin County Board of Elections and the Columbus City Clerk. Campaign finance reports filed with the Franklin County Board of Elections are paper only, while the campaign finance reports filed with the Columbus City Clerk are electronic only. However, the Columbus Campaign Finance Reporting System was designed to convert electronic reports filed with the City Clerk to pdf files that may be printed, signed, and filed with the Franklin County Board of Elections.

Campaign finance report filing deadlines 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, Council Member, City Auditor, and City Attorney) are only elected in odd-numbered years (2017, 2019, 2021, etc.). A municipal ballot issue could appear on the ballot in any year.

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 or more candidates are certified to run in a year when three city council members are to be elected at the general election. In a year when no primary election is held for a municipal office, no campaign finance reports related to the date of the primary election are required to be filed by the candidates for the office that is not appearing on the primary election ballot.

### **State law required campaign finance reports**

1. **Annual Report** – must be filed no later than 4 pm 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 and December 31 of the prior year. However, the Annual Report is not required if a campaign committee filed a Post-General Election Report. An Annual Report is required to be filed even if the campaign committee had no contributions or expenditures for the reporting period.
2. **Semiannual Report** – must be filed no later than 4 pm 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 and June 30. A Semiannual Report is not required if a campaign committee filed a Post-Primary Election Report. The campaign

committees of municipal candidates are not required to file a Semiannual Report unless the campaign committee received contributions exceeding \$10,000 for the reporting period.

3. Pre-Primary, Pre-General, and Pre-Special Election Reports – must be filed no later than 4 pm of the twelfth 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 20<sup>th</sup> day before the election. However, the Pre-Primary, Pre-General, and Pre-Special Election Reports are only required if the candidate or municipal ballot issue is on the ballot at that election and if the campaign committee received or spent \$1,000 or more for the reporting period. The \$1,000 threshold includes monetary and in-kind contributions as well as the value of any new loans received during the reporting period.
4. Post-Primary, Post-General, and Post-Special Election Reports – must be filed no later than 4 pm of the 38<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> day after the election.
5. 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 to update/amend this information as necessary by filing an updated Designation of Treasurer form with the Board of Elections and the Columbus City Clerk. There is no specific deadline for filing a Designation of Treasurer or to file an updated version, but one must be filed before the campaign committee receives any contributions or makes any expenditures.
6. 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 Columbus City Clerk. 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 SOS Form must also be marked when the committee wants to terminate. There is no separate form for terminating.

#### Columbus City Code Required Campaign Finance Reports

Columbus City Codes section 2321.53(D) requires different campaign finance reports depending upon whether the candidate or the municipal ballot issue are on the ballot that year or not. The Columbus campaign finance reports are **in addition to** the state-law required campaign finance reports:

1. Mid-Cycle/60 Day Report – must be filed no later than 4 pm of the 60<sup>th</sup> day before the primary and/or the general 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 campaign finance report (if any) through the close of business on the sixty-eighth day before the election. However, the campaign committee of a municipal candidate is not required to file the Mid-Cycle/60 Day Report unless the committee had total contributions or total expenditures for the reporting period equal to or exceeding \$10,000.00. Note that a Mid-Cycle/60 Day Report is not required before a Special Election.

2. 5 Day Report – must be filed no later than 4 pm of the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 nineteenth day before the election through the close of business on the sixth day before the election. However, the campaign committee of a municipal candidate is not required to file the 5 Day Report unless the committee had total contributions or total expenditures for the reporting period equal to or exceeding \$10,000.00.
3. April Quarterly Report – must be filed no later than 4 pm 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. However, the campaign committee of a municipal candidate is not required to file the April Quarterly Report unless the committee had total contributions or total expenditures for the reporting period equal to or exceeding \$10,000.00.
4. October Quarterly Report – must be filed no later than 4 pm 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. However, the campaign committee of a municipal candidate is not required to file the October Quarterly Report unless the committee had total contributions or total expenditures for the reporting period equal to or exceeding \$10,000.00.

For more information on campaign finance reports, please see the Campaign Finance Handbook on the Ohio Secretary of State's website:

<http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/CampaignFinance/CFHandbook.aspx>.