

Frequently Asked Questions About Colorado Campaign and Political Finance Data

Click the questions below to jump to the relevant answers in the document.

[Who is required to file disclosure reports?](#)

[What things are disclosed?](#)

[Are there limits or prohibitions on contributions or expenditures?](#)

[What information is contained in the TRACER campaign finance database?](#)

[Information about the quality of data in the TRACER database](#)

[Whose data are included?](#)

[When are records made available to the public?](#)

[Are there reporting exceptions?](#)

Who is required to file disclosure reports?

The following persons and entities file disclosure reports with the Colorado Secretary of State's Office:

- ◆ Candidates and committees supporting or opposing candidates seeking nomination or election to public office.
- ◆ Political parties, political committees, and candidate committees who support or oppose candidates that file with the Secretary of State.
- ◆ Issue committees who support or oppose ballot questions, issues, or measures that file with the Secretary of State.
- ◆ Political organizations (so-called 527s) who seek to influence the selection, nomination, election, or appointment of candidates.
- ◆ Any person or entity making independent expenditures in excess of \$1000 per calendar year to support or oppose candidates must file disclosure reports with the Secretary of State.
- ◆ Persons or organizations who distribute advertisements or other material referring to a candidate within 30 days of a primary election or 60 days of a general election are required to file Electioneering Communication reports.

Municipal candidates and committees may also be required to file disclosure reports. These reports are not available in the campaign finance database but may be acquired by contacting the applicable [municipal clerk](#). Reporting by municipal candidates in home-ruled municipalities is governed by the applicable municipality's home rule charter.

Candidates for federal office such as President, United States Senator, or United States Congressman file disclosure reports with the [Federal Election Commission](#).

A "candidate" is any person who seeks nomination or election to any state or local public office that is to be voted on in this state at any primary election, general election, school district election, special district election, or municipal election. "Candidate" also includes a judge or justice of any court of record who seeks to be retained in office pursuant to the provisions of section 25 of article VI of the [Colorado Constitution](#). A person is a candidate for election if the person has publicly announced an intention to seek election to public office or

retention of a judicial office and thereafter has received a contribution or made an expenditure in support of the candidacy. A person remains a candidate for the purposes of campaign finance laws as long as a candidate committee is maintained (including term-limited office holders).

A “committee” is generally a combination of two or more individuals or an organization who contributes money or other items of value to any candidate or political party or who supports or opposes a candidate, ballot issue or ballot question.

What things are disclosed?

Candidates, committees, and political parties are required to disclose all contributions—both monetary and non-monetary (in-kind), loans, expenditures (including obligations of debt), electioneering communications, and contact information.

The name and address of any person contributing twenty dollars (\$20) or more to a candidate, committee, or political party must be disclosed. In addition to name and address, the occupation and employer for persons contributing one hundred dollars (\$100) or more must also be disclosed.

The amount, plus the name and address of the payee, must be reported for expenditures of twenty dollars (\$20) or more.

Are there limits or prohibitions on contributions or expenditures?

The Colorado Constitution sets contribution limits for political parties, political committees, small donor committees, and state candidate committees who report to the Colorado Secretary of State’s Office. Issue committees that report to the Secretary of State do not have contribution limits.

Corporations and labor organizations are prohibited from making contributions to candidate committees or political parties and may not provide funding for electioneering communications. Candidate committees, political committees, small donor committees, and political parties are prohibited from accepting contributions from foreign persons, foreign corporations, or foreign governments.

Some state candidates choose to accept voluntary spending limits which restrict the amount of money they may expend during an election cycle.

What information is contained in the TRACER campaign finance database?

Information from candidates, committees, and parties who file campaign finance disclosure reports with the Secretary of State is listed in the database. This information is available to the public.

The Secretary of State provides electronic data from 2000 for candidate and committees who file with the Secretary of State. Additionally, the Secretary of State’s website contains images of manually filed disclosure reports dating back to 1992. County information is only available from 2006 forward.

Beginning in 2010, candidates, committees, and parties who historically filed with the County Clerk and Recorder file disclosure reports with the Secretary of State.

Campaign finance disclosure reports for municipal candidates, committees, and parties are not included, but can be acquired by contacting the appropriate [municipal clerk](#).

The database contains records of contributions, expenditures, loans, notices of delinquent filings, requests for waiver of imposed fines, correspondence, and other important information.

In addition to the searchable and downloadable information contained in the TRACER database, the Secretary of State offers bulk data downloads of all information related to state and county candidates and committees, which allows interested persons to view contributions and expenditures in a Microsoft Excel format. Bulk data is not available for municipal candidates and committees.

Information about the quality of data in the TRACER campaign finance system

The information presented in the campaign finance database is, to the best of the ability of the Secretary of State, an accurate representation of the disclosure reports filed with the applicable office. It is suggested that the information found from reports data-entered by the Secretary of State or County Clerks (which includes reports filed prior to 2010) be cross-checked with the original document or scanned image of the original document.

Beginning in 2010, all candidates, committees, and political parties who file disclosure reports with the Secretary of State must do so electronically using the TRACER system. Therefore, all data contained in the database dated January 2010 onward reflects that data as entered by the reporting person or entity.

Prior to 2010, filers had the option of filing manual disclosure reports. Therefore, some of the information in the campaign finance database dated prior to 2010 was submitted in electronic form by the candidate, committee or party, and some of the information was data-entered from paper reports filed with the appropriate office. Sometimes items which are not consistent with filing requirements, such as missing names and addresses or contributions that exceed the allowable limits, are displayed when data is viewed online. Incorrect entries in the database typically reflect incorrect or incomplete entries on manually filed reports submitted to the Secretary of State or County Clerk. If you believe that there is a discrepancy in data dated prior to January 2010, please contact the appropriate filing officer for that data—the Secretary of State for statewide candidates, committees, and parties; or the County Clerk for county candidates and committees.

Whose data are included?

The campaign finance database contains disclosure reports filed by:

- ◆ State political parties
- ◆ Committees supporting or opposing state ballot issues, questions or measures
- ◆ Committees supporting or opposing county ballot issues, questions, or measures (excluding municipal issues)
- ◆ Political Organizations (527s) seeking to influence the selection, nomination, election, or appointment of candidates
- ◆ Candidates and committees supporting or opposing state candidates including:
 - Governor/ Lt. Governor
 - Secretary of State
 - State Senate
 - Regent of the University of Colorado
 - Attorney General
 - State Treasurer
 - State Representative
 - RTD Director

- ◆ Candidates and committees supporting or opposing local candidates including
 - County Commissioner
 - County Clerk & Recorder
 - County Treasurer
 - County Surveyor
 - Special District Directors
 - County Assessor
 - County Coroner
 - County Sheriff
 - School Board Directors
 - County Political Parties

The campaign finance database also contains electioneering communication reports filed by persons or organizations who distribute advertisements or other material referring to a candidate within 30 days of a primary election or 60 days of a general election.

The campaign finance database **does not** contain reports from candidates for federal office such as President, United States Senator, or United States Congressman. These reports are filed with the [Federal Election Commission](#).

Beginning July 1, 2007, political organizations, commonly referred to as 527 organizations, who receive contributions or undertake spending for Colorado political activities are required to file campaign finance disclosure reports. These reports have been available in the campaign finance database since July 1, 2007. For political organization disclosure reports filed prior to this date, please visit the [Internal Revenue Service](#) website.

The campaign finance database **does not** contain reports for municipal candidates, parties, or committees. Please contact the applicable [municipal clerk](#) for these reports.

When are records made available to the public?

Our data is as current as possible, and in many instances is posted to the TRACER campaign finance system in real-time. Campaign finance disclosure reports filed electronically are posted to the database as soon as they are filed by candidates, parties, or committees. Documents and reports that require approval (such as committee registrations) may take longer to become publicly available, but are typically processed and posted within one business day of submission.

For reports that were filed manually (prior to 2010 only) with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State provides the information that was data-entered, as well as scanned images of the reports themselves. These images are available in the TRACER campaign finance database.

Are there reporting exceptions?

The laws governing campaign and political finance, including disclosure requirements, do not apply to home rule counties or municipalities that have adopted charters, ordinances, or resolutions that address campaign finance issues. Please contact the appropriate county or municipality to obtain information about the availability of campaign finance disclosure reports. The following counties are currently subject to a home rule charter:

- ◆ City and County of Broomfield
- ◆ City and County of Denver
- ◆ Pitkin County
- ◆ Weld County