



STATE OF MAINE
COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENTAL ETHICS
AND ELECTION PRACTICES
135 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0135

To: Commission

From: Jonathan Wayne, Executive Director

Date: February 6, 2026

Re: Proposed Legislation – Party Committee Disclosure of Ballot Question Activity

A recent complaint highlighted ambiguity in Maine’s campaign finance law concerning how the committees of political parties should report contributions received and expenditures made to support or oppose ballot questions. Generally, organizations that raise or spend more than \$5,000 to influence a ballot question must register and file campaign finance reports as a ballot question committee.¹ But, the Legislature also decided that “A party committee shall report all expenditures made to influence a campaign [in their regular campaign finance reports].” 21-A M.R.S. § 1017-A(2). The term “campaign” is defined in 21-A M.R.S. § 1052(1) to refer to both candidate and ballot question elections.

The Commission staff reviewed how party committees’ contributions and expenditures to influence a ballot question will be displayed to the public in the Commission’s new eFiling system. We conferred on how the law should be amended to avoid ambiguity. The Commission’s managers believe the simplest and most accessible way to disclose this financial data is:

- requiring party committees to include their ballot question transactions in their regular campaign finance reports, and
- exempting party committees from the definition of ballot question committee.

We therefore recommend the attached legislation, which could be considered this session by the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee in connection with the Commission’s 2026 agency bill, LD 2000. After conferring with counsel, we may circulate a revised draft prior to the February 10 meeting. Thank you.

¹ 21-A M.R.S. §§ 1052(2-A) (definition of ballot question committee), 1052-A(1)(A-1) (registration by ballot question committees), and 1059(2) & 1060 (campaign finance reporting by ballot question committees)

Proposed Committee Amendment – LD 2000

21-A M.R.S. § 1017-A. Reports of contributions and expenditures by party committees

The committees of political parties qualified under section 301 shall file campaign finance reports on forms prescribed by the commission as required by this section.

1. Contributions. A party committee shall report all contributions in cash or in kind from a single contributor that in the aggregate total more than \$200. The party committee shall report the name, mailing address, occupation and place of business of each contributor. Contributions of \$200 or less must be reported, and these contributions may be reported as a lump sum.

2. Expenditures to influence a campaign. A party committee shall report all expenditures made to influence a campaign, as defined in section 1052, subsection 1. The party committee shall report:

- A.** Each candidate or ballot question supported or opposed by the expenditure;
- B.** The office sought by a candidate and the district that the candidate seeks to represent;
- B-1.** The amount spent to support or oppose each candidate or ballot question;
- C.** The date and purpose of each expenditure; and
- D.** The name and address of each payee.

3. Other expenditures. Operational expenses and other expenditures that are not made to influence a campaign, as defined in section 1052, subsection 1 must be reported separately. The party committee shall report:

- A.** The name and address of each payee;
- B.** The purpose for the expenditure; and
- C.** The date and amount of each expenditure.

4. Filing schedule. [Repealed]

4-A. Filing schedule. A state party committee shall file its reports according to the following schedule. All reports required under paragraphs A, B and C must be filed by 11:59 p.m. on the day of the filing deadline.

- A.** A state party committee shall file quarterly reports:
 - (1)** On January 15th, which must be complete up to December 31st;

- (2) On April 10th, which must be complete up to March 31st;
- (3) On July 15th, which must be complete up to June 30th; and
- (4) On October 5th, which must be complete up to September 30th.

B. During any year in which primary and general elections are held, a state party committee shall file primary and general election reports in addition to the reports required under paragraph A:

- (1) On the 11th day before the date on which the election is held, which must be complete up to the 14th day before that date; and
- (2) On the 42nd day after the date on which the election is held, which must be complete up to the 35th day after that date.

C. In an election year other than a year described in paragraph B, if a state party committee has received contributions or made expenditures for the purpose of influencing a ballot question election, a special election or a municipal candidate or referendum election subject to Title 30-A, section 2502, the committee shall file preelection and post-election reports:

- (1) On the 11th day before the date on which the election is held, which must be complete up to the 14th day before that date; and
- (2) On the 42nd day after the date on which the election is held, which must be complete up to the 35th day after that date.

D. A state party committee that files an election report under paragraph B or C is not required to file a quarterly report under paragraph A when the deadline for that quarterly report falls within 10 days of the filing deadline established in paragraph B or C.

E. If a state party committee is required to file a report 11 days before an election pursuant to paragraph B or C, the committee shall report any single contribution of \$5,000 or more received or any single expenditure of \$1,000 or more made after the 14th day before the election and more than 24 hours before 5:00 p.m. on the day of the election within 24 hours of that contribution or expenditure. The committee is not required to include in this report expenditures for overhead expenses or compensation paid to an employee or other member of the campaign staff who has received payments at regular intervals that have been disclosed in previously filed campaign finance reports. As used in this paragraph, “overhead expenses” includes, but is not limited to, rent, utility payments, taxes, insurance premiums or similar administrative expenses.

4-B. Filing schedule for municipal, district and county party committees. Municipal, district and county party committees shall file reports according to the following schedule.

Same
changes to
this
paragraph
as printed
in LD 2000

A. Reports filed during an election year must be filed with the commission by 11:59 p.m. on:

- (1) July 15th and be complete as of June 30th;
- (2) The 11th day before the date on which the general election is held and must be complete up to the 14th day before that date; and
- (3) January 15th and be complete as of December 31st.

B. Reports filed during a nonelection year must be filed by 11:59 p. m. on:

- (1) July 15th and be complete as of June 30th; and
- (2) January 15th and be complete as of December 31st.

Same changes to this paragraph as printed in LD 2000

C. A committee shall report any single contribution of \$5,000 or more received or any expenditure of \$1,000 or more made after the 14th day before a general or special election and more than 24 hours before 11:59 p.m. on the day of the election within 24 hours of that contribution or expenditure. The committee is not required to include in this report expenditures for overhead expenses or compensation paid to an employee or other member of the campaign staff who has received payments at regular intervals that have been disclosed in previously filed campaign finance reports. As used in this paragraph, “overhead expenses” includes, but is not limited to, rent, utility payments, taxes, insurance premiums or similar administrative expenses.

4-C. Electronic filing. State party committees shall file each report required by this section through an electronic filing system developed by the commission. The commission may make an exception to this electronic filing requirement if a party committee submits a written request that states that the party committee lacks access to the technology or the technological ability to file reports electronically. The request for an exception must be submitted by March 1st of the election year. The commission shall grant all reasonable requests for exceptions.

5. Penalties. A party committee is subject to the penalties in section 1020-A, subsection 4-A.

6. Notice; forms. A state party committee shall notify all county, district and municipal party committees of the same political party of the party committee reporting requirements. The party committees shall obtain the necessary forms from the commission to complete the filing requirements.

7. Exemption. Any party committee receiving and expending less than \$1,500 in one calendar year is exempt from the reporting requirements of this section for that year.

8. Municipal elections. When a party committee makes contributions or expenditures on behalf of a candidate for municipal office subject to this subchapter, it shall file a

copy of the reports required by this section with the clerk in that candidate's municipality.

21-A M.R.S. § 1052. Definitions

As used in this subchapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

1. Campaign. “Campaign” means any course of activities to influence the nomination or election of a candidate or to initiate or influence any of the following ballot measures:

- A.** A people’s veto referendum under the Constitution of Maine, Article IV, Part Third, Section 17;
- B.** A direct initiative of legislation under the Constitution of Maine, Article IV, Part Third, Section 18;
- C.** An amendment to the Constitution of Maine under Article X, Section 4;
- D.** A referendum vote on a measure enacted by the Legislature and expressly conditioned upon ratification by a referendum vote under the Constitution of Maine, Article IV, Part Third, Section 19;
- E.** The ratification of the issue of bonds by the State or any agency thereof; and
- F.** Any county or municipal referendum.

2. Committee. “Committee” means any political action committee or ballot question committee and includes any agent of a political action committee or ballot question committee.

2-A. Ballot question committee. “Ballot question committee” means a person that receives contributions or makes expenditures aggregating in excess of \$5,000 for the purpose of initiating or influencing a campaign, other than a campaign for the nomination or election of a candidate. The term “ballot question committee” does not include a political action committee, a party committee or an exempt donor.

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SUMMARY

The amendment clarifies that party committees must disclose in their campaign finance reports the amounts they have spent to support or oppose candidates or ballot questions. The amendment adds party committees to the list of entities that are exempt from the definition of ballot question committee.