

FAQ for Closing Out Your 2018 Candidate Campaign

All candidates are legally required to follow Montana's campaign finance laws. To ensure you understand what is required of you, please [read this PDF](#). As always, please contact the office of the Commissioner of Political Practices with questions at (406) 444-2942, email cpphelp@mt.gov, or stop in at the Helena office at 1209 8th Avenue.

1. Q: I don't have any more funds in my campaign bank account; do I need to submit a C-118?

A: No. If you have paid off all campaign debts and have \$0 remaining in your campaign account, you need to simply "close out your campaign" by filling a C-5 financial report in CERS.

2. Q: What options do I have for my remaining 2018 campaign funds?

Your options depend on if you plan to have money in your account after November 26th:

If you dispose of all campaign funds by the November 26th C-5 reporting deadline, all transactions can be detailed on the Nov. 26th report. Your options to dispose of funds by November 26th are:

1. Return the funds to contributors. These returned contributions would be reported in your November 26th C-5 report as an expenditure. You must include the full name and mailing address of the recipient.
2. Donate the funds to a nonprofit. Report this transaction in your November 26th C-5 as an expense.

If you have funds remaining after the November 26th reporting deadline, you can:

1. Donate the funds to a nonprofit. These donations must be reported on a C-118 campaign finance form.
2. If elected, you can establish a constituent services account. This requires you to file a C-118 C form and put the money in a bank account with "constituent services" in the account title. Please note that there are specific legal requirements for a constituent services account. Funds in a constituent services account are restricted to being used for certain activities and require detailed accounting and periodic reports. See [this document](#) for details.

3. Q: Can I give my campaign's surplus money to another campaign?

A: No. You cannot give your surplus money to another campaign, including a future campaign.

4. Q: I still owe payment on debts and loans made during the campaign. Can I keep my campaign account open beyond November 26th while I make payment on these obligations?

A: Yes. If the campaign has outstanding debts or loans, the campaign may be kept open until these obligations are paid. Contributions may still be accepted by the candidate, but these contributions may be used **ONLY** to help pay off the obligations owed by the campaign.

5. Q: Can I keep a balance in my campaign bank account in order to keep the account open for future campaigns?

A: Yes. You will need to zero out your account, report to the COPP that the account has been emptied, and then add any personal funds necessary to keep the account open. This amount would be reported in your next campaign's initial C-5 report as a contribution.

6. Q: How long do I have to decide what to do with surplus campaign money?

A: You must dispose of the funds within 120 days after you've filed your C-5 campaign finance report and file either a C-118 or C-118 C report (See Question 7 and 8 for more details).

7. Q: I understand that if I open a constituent services account, I must file a C-118 C. What information must be reported in a C-118 C?

A: A candidate must disclose the details of their newly created constituent account. The [C-118 C](#) form must include a copy of the transaction between the campaign account and the constituent account. A bank statement showing the transaction satisfies this requirement. The C-118 C form must be emailed to cppcompliance@mt.gov, faxed to 406-444-1643, or mailed to P.O. Box 202401 (Helena, MT, 59620-2401).

8. Q: I will donate my surplus campaign funds to a nonprofit AFTER November 26th, 2018. When must a C-118 be filed?

A: A C-118 hard copy form must be filed with the Commissioner of Political Practices within 120 days after your C-5 report is filed. For example, if you file your C-5 report on November 26, 2018, you must then file your C-118 by March 26, 2019 (120 days later). The C-118 must be emailed to cppcompliance@mt.gov, faxed to 406-444-1643, or mailed to P.O. Box 202401 (Helena, MT, 59620-2401).

9. Q: What do I need to report if I need to pay myself back for a campaign loan?

A: First, the loan must have already been reported as a loan in a previous C-5 report. Once you pay yourself from your campaign bank account, this amount must be reported in the "Payments" section. Once you've paid off all debts and loans, your campaign bank account can then be closed.

If you made a personal loan to your campaign, you also have the option to forgive the amount of your personal loan (and not pay yourself back). If you choose this option, please email cppcompliance@mt.gov and note 1) your campaign name (E.g. Johnson for HD 15, 2018) and 2) the amount of the forgiven loan.

10. Q: Who can I contact with questions?

A: Contact the Commissioner of Political Practices' office at 406) 444-2942, email cpphelp@mt.gov, or stop in at the Helena office at 1209 8th Avenue.