

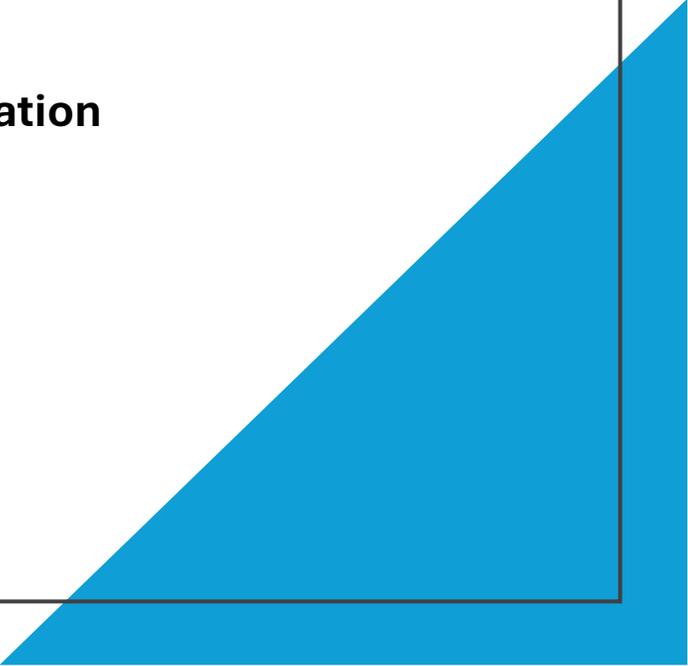
Candidate Campaign Finance Reporting and Disclosure

**Commissioner of Political
Practices**

Chris J. Gallus
COMMISSIONER



Outline

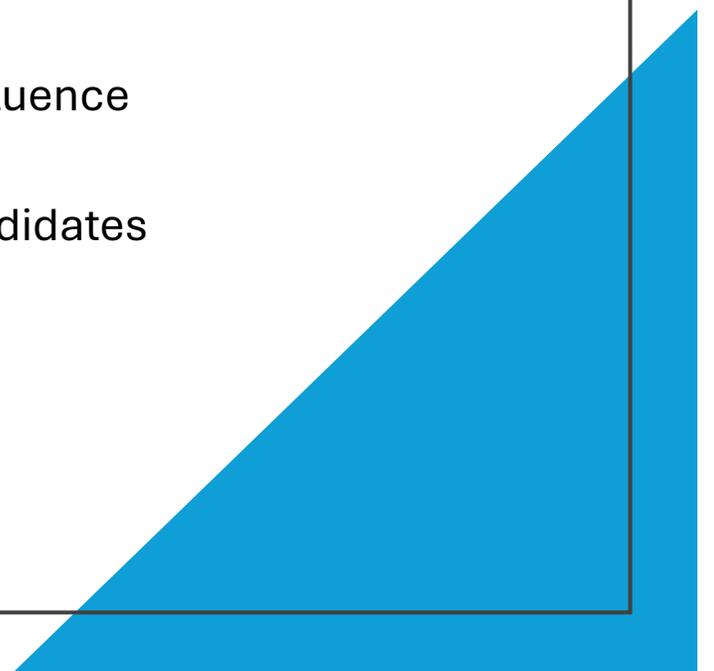
- **COPP's role in Montana elections**
 - **Candidate registration requirements with COPP**
 - **Campaign Finance Reporting- forms, dates, and background information**
 - **Additional information and resources**
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COPP's role in Montana elections



COPP's role in Montana elections

- Montana's Office of the Commissioner of Political Practices (COPP) was created by the state's citizen legislature in 1975
- The office was created to establish disclosure of the money used to influence elections held in Montana
- This disclosure occurs via the filing of campaign finance reports by candidates seeking election to public office and political committees



COPP's role in Montana elections

- COPP Compliance Specialists review all registrations and finance reports filed by candidates participating in Montana elections, MCA's [13-37-121](#) and [123](#)
- After this review has been conducted, COPP may send the candidate/campaign an Inspection Report identifying or pointing out items that may not be reported properly, may require additional information to meet Montana's disclosure requirements, etc.
- If you receive an Inspection Report, please immediately make any requested changes, or reach out to COPP for clarification!

COPP's role in Montana Elections

- COPP staff is available to answer questions about Montana's campaign finance reporting and disclosure requirements, as well as offer some assistance in utilizing the Campaign Electronic Reporting System (CERS) to file required statements and reports
- Call (406-444-2942) or email (cpphelp@mt.gov, cppcompliance@mt.gov) with questions!



Candidate Registration Requirements with COPP

Candidate Registration Requirements with COPP

- Montana election law requires that individuals register with COPP within 5 days of becoming a candidate, MCA [13-37-201](#)
- An individual becomes a candidate by:
 1. Soliciting or receiving campaign contribution/s;
 2. Making or authorizing campaign expenditure/s; or
 3. Formally filing as a candidate with the election administrator (Montana's Secretary of State's office for statewide or state district offices, the county elections administrator for county, city, and school offices)

Candidate Registration Requirements with COPP

- Candidates register with COPP by filing a Statement of Candidate
- The following information needs to be included on the Statement of Candidate:
 - The candidate's full name, office sought, and partisan affiliation (if a partisan election);
 - The full name and mailing address of the designated campaign treasurer (a candidate can designate themselves the treasurer); and
 - The name and address of the campaign depository (bank)

Candidate Registration Requirements with COPP

- Candidates file the Statement of Candidate online, using the Campaign Electronic Reporting System (CERS)
- Candidates for local office- county, municipal (city), and school offices- must designate a reporting status:
 - Option 1: contribution/expenditure activity will be under \$500.00 (“B” box); or
 - Option 2: contribution/expenditure activity will meet or exceed \$500.00 (“C” box)

Campaign Registration View

» Statement of Candidate (C1 or C1-A)

▼ Candidate Information

Candidate Full Name: Cook (COPP Test Account!), Scott
Mailing Address: 1209 8th Ave. Helena, MT 59601
Home Phone: (406) 444-2942
Campaign Email Address: cppcompliance@mt.gov
Election Year: 2025
Office Sought: Mayor
Political Party: Non-Partisan
Date Filed: 09/14/2016
D1 Received Date:
Reporting Status: Will spend more than \$500
Bank Full Name: Lending Tree

Physical Address: 1209 8th Ave. Helena, MT 59601
Alternate Phone:

Candidate Type: City
Resident County: Lewis & Clark
Current Status: Amended
Amended Date: 04/28/2025
C118 Received Date:

Bank Address: 1 Main St. Bozeman, MT 59715

▼ Campaign Treasurer Information

Treasurer Full Name: Belford, Deb
Mailing Address: 1209 8th Ave. Helena, MT 59601
Home Phone: (406) 444-3942
Home or Personal Email Address: cppcompliance@mt.gov

Physical Address: 1209 8th Ave. Helena, MT 59601
Alternate Phone:

▼ Deputy Treasurer Information

Candidate Registration Requirements with COPP

- The Statement of Candidate must be updated within 5 business days to reflect any changes to information previously submitted- a new treasurer has been appointed, the campaign's mailing address or other contact information has changed, etc.- pursuant to [44.11.303\(2\)](#), ARM
- COPP staff uses the information provided on the Statement of Candidate to contact a candidate/campaign. COPP can't contact a candidate/campaign if accurate information isn't provided!

Questions about
candidate registration
requirements with COPP?



Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information



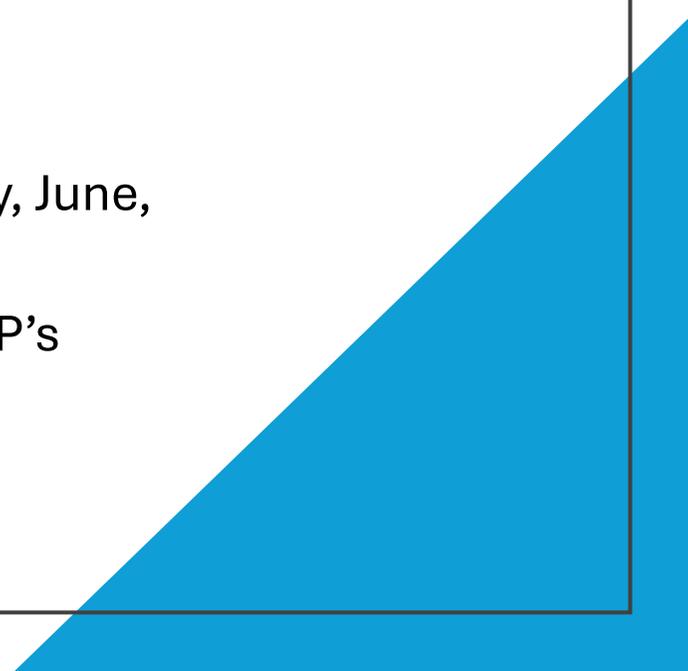
Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- Candidates/campaigns are required to utilize a campaign bank account in which to deposit all contributions received and through which to make all expenditures, MCA [13-37-205](#). Cannot be the candidate's personal account!
- Primary and general election contributions (if a primary is held) must be deposited in separate accounts- legislative candidates excepted

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- Montana election law requires that candidates seeking election to public office file periodic finance reports disclosing all campaign contributions received, campaign expenditures made, and debts owed. See MCA [13-37-225 through 229](#)
- Local candidates who certify that contributions and expenditures will remain below \$500.00 (“B” box candidates) are exempted from filing campaign finance reports

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- Candidates report all contributions received and expenditures made via form C-5, the candidate campaign finance report
 - Form C-5 is filed electronically, via CERS
 - 2026 candidates report monthly: on the 20th of March, April, May, June, August, September, October, and November
 - The full 2026 candidate [Reporting Calendar](#) is available on COPP's website
- 

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- **Please don't wait until reporting day to start your C-5 report!**
Contributions and expenditures can be entered as they happen
- Reports can be filed anytime between the 15th and the 20th
- COPP Compliance Specialists are generally extremely busy on reporting days. We may not be able to assist everyone

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- A contribution is any “advance, gift, loan, conveyance, deposit, payment, or distribution of money or anything of value to support” a candidate’s campaign, MCA [13-1-101](#)(9)
- A candidate/campaign must be able to identify all campaign contributions received, notably the date the contribution was received, the amount of the contribution, and the identity of the contributor
- Anonymous contributions are specifically prohibited under Montana election law, MCA [13-37-217](#)

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

Monetary Contributions are:

- Cash or check provided to the campaign and deposited in the campaign account
- Includes any funds provided by the candidate to their own campaign

In-Kind Contributions are:

- Items or services of value provided to the campaign for free, or at a reduced rate
- Includes items or services purchased personally by the candidate and then contributed to their own campaign

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- Types of contributors:
 1. Individual contributors (other than the candidate)
 2. Political committees
 3. Fundraisers or related “mass collection” events (for contributors who are under \$50.00 in aggregate contributions)
 4. Refunds, rebates, etc.
 5. Loans
 6. Contributions from the candidate to their own campaign
- 

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- All contributions are entered in the C-5 report using the “Contributors” tab
- Click the ‘Add’ icon to add a new entry
- Use the corresponding subtab for each type of contributor- i.e. use the “individuals” subtab to report contributions received from individuals other than the candidate; the “committees” subtab to report contributions received from political committees; etc.

- Dashboard
- Candidate
- Committee
- Reports
- Administration
- State of Montana

Welcome

Candidate Campaign Finance Report » (C-5)

Candidate Information

Candidate Full Name: Cook (COPP Test Account!), Scott **Election Year:** 2025

Mailing Address: 1209 8th Ave. Helena, MT 59601 **Office Sought:** Mayor

Reporting Period: *From 01/01/2025 *To 06/15/2025 **Status:** Pending

Contributions | Expenditures | Debts | Payments | Attachments | Summary | File | Help

Individuals | Committee | Fundraiser | Refunds, Etc | Loan | Self-Contribution | Help

Entity	Election Type	Occupation	Employer	Date	Cash/Check Amount	In-Kind Value	In-Kind Description	Total to Date
<p>+ Add Edit Delete Page 1 of 0 No records to view</p>								

Save Exit - Please Select - Download Template Data Load Prev Next

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- An expenditure is any purchase, payment, etc. made by a candidate/campaign “to support or oppose a candidate or ballot issue”, MCA [13-1-101\(21\)](#)
- A candidate/campaign must be able to identify all funds expended. Hold onto receipts, invoices, etc. related to each expenditure

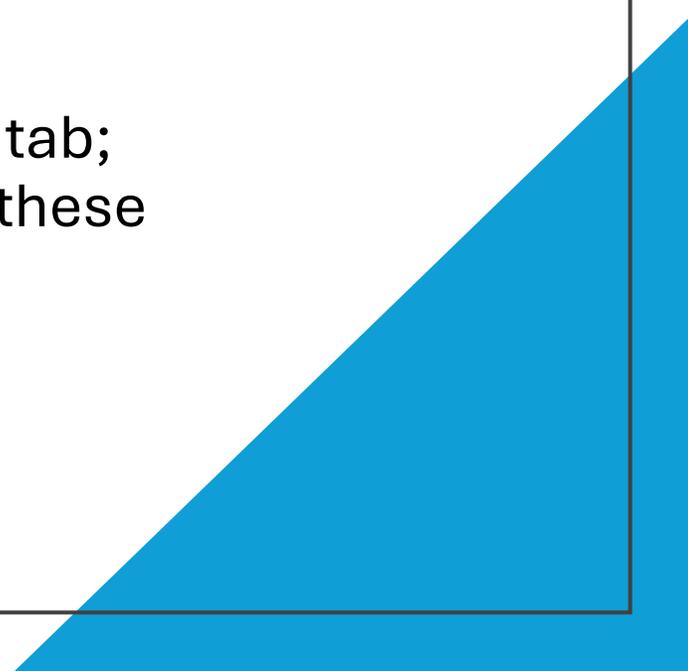
Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- Expenditure details candidates are required to report include:
 - Date of the expenditure
 - Amount of the expenditure
 - Name and address of the entity to whom the expenditure was made
 - Brief description of the expense
- Expenditures made to a “consultant, advertising agency, polling firm, or other person that performs services” on behalf of the campaign need to be “itemized” (i.e., individually identified) and “described in sufficient detail to disclose the specific services performed”, MCA [13-37-229\(2\)\(b\)](#)

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- Any obligation owed by the campaign for to a vendor or related entity for the provision of goods/services to the campaign is considered a debt and must be reported as such
- ***Debts must be reported within the campaign finance report reporting period where incurred, not when paid!*** If the exact amount owed is unknown, an estimated amount must be reported
- Report debts with the same level of detail as expenditures

Campaign Finance Reporting- Forms, Dates, and Background Information

- Expenditures are entered in the C-5 report using the “Expenditures” tab
 - Debts are entered in the C-5 report using the “Debts” tab; use the “Payments” tab to report payments made on these obligations as they occur
 - Click the ‘Add’ icon to add a new entry
- 
- A blue triangular graphic is located in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing upwards and to the left.

- Dashboard
- Candidate
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Candidate Campaign Finance Report » (C-5)

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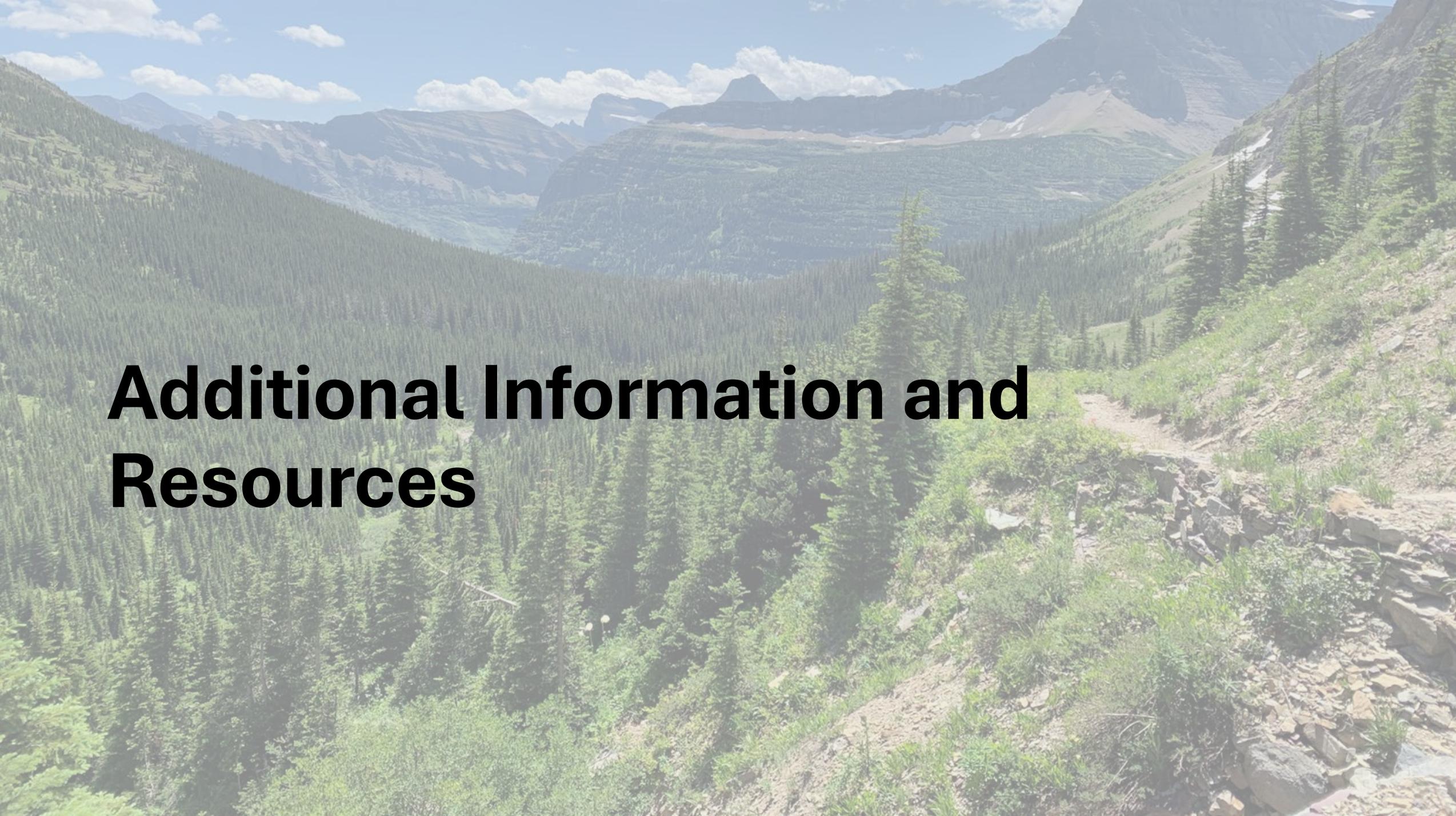
Reporting Period: *From 01/01/2025 *To 06/15/2025 **Status:** Pending

- Contributions
- Expenditures**
- Debts
- Payments
- Attachments
- Summary
- File
- Help

Entity	Election Type	Description of Expense	Refund	Platform	Quantity	Specific Services	Attachment	Date	Amount
+ Add Edit Delete									
Page 1 of 0 5									
No records to view									

Save Exit - Please Select - Download Template Data Load Prev Next

Questions about
campaign finance
reporting?



Additional Information and Resources

Campaign Contribution Limits

- Candidates are limited in the amount they may accept from contributors (other than themselves), MCA [13-37-216](#)
 - Both monetary and in-kind contributions count towards the contribution limits
 - Contribution limits apply per-election, with an election being any contested primary and/or the general election
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- <https://politicalpractices.mt.gov/Home/Contribution-Limits>

STATE OF MONTANA POLITICAL CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION LIMITS SUMMARY

Applicable as of November 7, 2025

This guide is just a summary - for complete requirements, see [Title 13, Chapters 35](#) and [37, MCA](#).

CANDIDATE

To Own Campaign No Limit

INDIVIDUAL Human Being

To a Political Party Committee No Limit
 To a Political Action Committee..... No Limit
 To a Ballot Issue Committee..... No Limit

To candidates for Governor/Lt. Governor \$1,190 per election
 To a candidate for Other Statewide Office* \$830 per election
 To a candidate for Other Public Office** \$470 per election

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

To a Political Party Committee No Limit
 To a Political Action Committee..... No Limit
 To a Ballot Issue Committee..... No Limit

POLITICAL COMMITTEES (Excludes Political Party Committees)

To candidates for Governor/Lt. Governor \$1,190 per election
 To a candidate for Other Statewide Office* \$830 per election
 To a candidate for Other Public Office** \$470 per election

POLITICAL PARTY COMMITTEE Aggregate Limits from ALL political party committees

Political Party Committees may contribute to judicial candidates (i.e. Supreme Court Justice, District Judge, Justice of the Peace). See [House Bill 39](#) (2025 Montana Legislature), which repealed Montana's prior prohibition found in MCA 13-35-231.

See also personnel services exception [ARM 44.11.225 \(3\)](#).

To candidates for Governor/Lt. Governor..... \$118,700 per election
 To a candidate for Other Statewide Office* \$89,050 per election
 To a candidate for Public Service Commission... \$17,800 per election
 To a candidate for State Senate \$3,550 per election
 To a candidate for Other Public Office** \$2,350 per election

CORPORATION OR UNION

May *not* contribute directly or indirectly to a candidate, [13-35-227, MCA](#).

The “Paid for by” attribution statement

- All paid campaign materials require inclusion of a “Paid for by” attribution statement, MCA [13-35-225](#)
- This attribution statement needs to include the words “paid for by”, the candidate/campaign’s name and address, and partisan affiliation (if a partisan election)
- For example: “Paid for by J Coffee, PO Box 1, Helena, MT, 59601. Coffee party”

Additional resources

- For information about Montana's campaign finance reporting and disclosure requirements, see [The Accounting and Reporting Manual for Candidates and Campaign Treasurers \(Green Book\)](#) or the [Education and Resources](#) page on COPP's agency website
- For information about accessing Montana's Campaign Electronic Reporting System (CERS) and utilizing it to file a Statement of Candidate or C-5 campaign finance report, see [The Candidate and Treasurer Guide to Navigating CERS](#)



Finally... please feel free to contact COPP with questions!

- **Address:** 1209 8th Avenue (Helena)
- **Phone:** (406) 444-2942
- **Email:** cpphelp@mt.gov or cppcompliance@mt.gov
- <https://politicalpractices.mt.gov>