



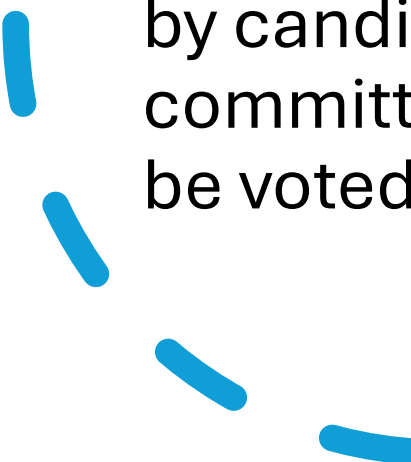
Montana Campaign Finance Reporting and Disclosure

Commissioner of Political Practices

Chris J. Gallus
COMMISSIONER

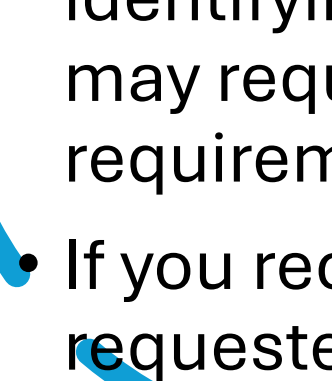


COPP's Role in Montana Elections

- 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 supporting/opposing candidates and ballot issues to be voted on
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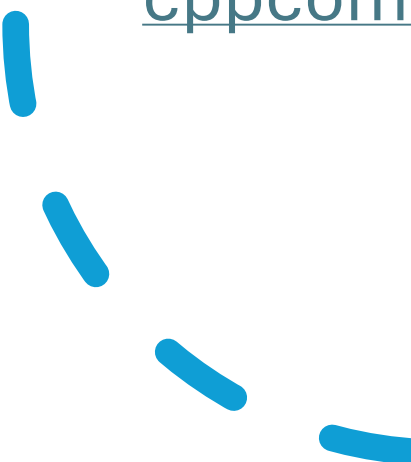


COPP's Role in Montana Elections

- COPP Compliance Specialists review all registrations and finance reports filed by candidates and political committees participating in Montana elections, MCA's [13-37-121](#) and [123](#)
 - After this review has been conducted, COPP may send the candidate or political committee email correspondence identifying or highlighting items that may not be reported properly, may require additional information to meet Montana's disclosure requirements, etc.
 - If you receive this kind of message, please immediately make any requested changes, or reach out to COPP for clarification!
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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!
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Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- Candidates and political committees 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](#). Candidates are specifically prohibited from using a personal account
- For candidates: primary and general election contributions (if a primary is held) must be deposited in separate accounts- legislative candidates excepted

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- Montana election law requires that candidates and political committees file periodic finance reports disclosing campaign contributions received, campaign expenditures made, and debts owed. See MCA [13-37-225 through 229](#)
- Candidates file on the 20th of each month: March, April, May, June, August, September, October, November
- Political committees file on the 30th of each month: March, April, May, June, August, September, October, November
- The full 2026 [Reporting Calendars](#) are available on COPP's website

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- Candidates report all contributions received and expenditures made via form C-5, the candidate campaign finance report
- Ballot issue, independent (PACs) and political party committees report all contributions received and expenditures made via form C-6
- Incidental committees report certain earmarked contributions received and all expenditures made via form C-4. See MCA [13-37-232](#) for specific incidental committee reporting requirements

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- **Please don't wait until reporting day to start your report!**
Contributions and expenditures can be entered into a finance report in CERS as the activity occurs
- Reports can be filed anytime between the 16th and the 20th (candidates)/26th and the 30th (political committees)
- COPP Compliance Specialists are generally extremely busy on reporting days. We may not be able to assist everyone

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- A contribution is any “advance, gift, loan, conveyance, deposit, payment, or distribution of money or anything of value to support” a candidate or political committee, MCA [13-1-101](#)(12)
- Candidates and political committees 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 (including their occupation and employer)
- Anonymous contributions are specifically prohibited under Montana election law, MCA [13-37-217](#)

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

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

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

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

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- 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
- Aggregate (total) limits apply to contributions received from political party committees

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- An expenditure is any purchase, payment, etc. made by a candidate or political committee “to support or oppose a candidate or ballot issue”, MCA [13-1-101](#)(24). **This includes debts incurred but not yet paid by the candidate or political committee**
- Candidates and political committees must be able to identify and track all campaign expenditures. Hold onto receipts, invoices, or related documentation for each individual expenditure

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- Expenditure details candidates and political committees 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\(2\)\(b\)](#)

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- An independent expenditure is any expenditure made by a political committee to support or oppose a candidate or ballot issue that is not coordinated with the candidate/campaign or ballot issue committee, MCA [13-1-101\(28\)](#)
- In addition to regular expenditure detail, independent expenditures must be specifically reported as independent expenditures and name the candidate or issue the expenditure was intended to benefit, ARM [44.11.502\(6\)](#)
- Independent expenditures do not count towards Montana's campaign contribution limits! Coordinated expenditures involving candidates/campaigns, by contrast, are capped by the contribution limits

Candidate and Political Committee Reporting Requirements

- Expenditures are entered in the candidate or committee finance report using the “Expenditures” tab. Political committees report Independent Expenditures using the “Independent Expenditures” subtab
- Debts are entered in the candidate or committee finance 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

Questions about candidate
and political committee
reporting requirements
with COPP?

The “Paid for by” Attribution Statement

- All paid campaign materials require inclusion of a “Paid for by” attribution statement, MCA [13-35-225](#)
- For candidates: the 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 political committees: the attribution statement needs to include the words “paid for by”, the name of the political committee, the name of the designated treasurer (or other officer specifically certified on the Statement of Organization), and the committee/officer’s address

The “Paid for by” Attribution Statement

- Example candidate attribution: Paid for by Steve Rogers, PO Box 1, Helena, MT 59601. Candidate Rogers’ partisan affiliation as a member of the Superhero Party would also need to be identified campaign material
- Example political committee attribution: “Paid for by Montanans for Iron Man. Tony Stark, Treasurer. PO Box 2, Bozeman, MT 59715”.

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>

