

2026 Judicial Elections Webinar

December 3, 2025

[3] Campaign Finance Disclosure

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Session Materials

- > PowerPoint Presentation2
- > [Candidate/Gubernatorial Committees](#)
 - Includes forms, help/manuals, dates, and more.



Michigan Bureau of Elections

Campaign Finance Judicial Candidate Training

December 3, 2025

Introduction

The Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA) provides for public disclosure of the funds spent and received to support or oppose candidates and ballot issues.

Candidate and other committee types are required to register and file campaign statements with the appropriate filing official.

This presentation will introduce you to the disclosure requirements for judicial candidate committees



Becoming a Candidate – [MCL 169.203](#)

Becoming a candidate involves one of the following:

- File a fee, affidavit, nominating petition, OR
- Party certified nominee, OR
- Receive a contribution, make an expenditure or authorize someone else to do so on your behalf, OR
- Hold office and are the subject of a recall vote, OR
- Have been elected and hold that elective office and can seek re-election (Appointment to an elective office does NOT make you a candidate, therefore does not trigger MCFA filing requirements.)



Filing Campaign Finance Reports – [MCL 169.236](#)

All judicial candidates listed must file campaign finance reports with the Bureau of Elections:

- Supreme Court
- Court of Appeals
- Circuit Court
- District Court
- Probate Court
- Municipal Court



Incumbents Running for Re-Election

- Incumbent judges are considered a candidate for the next election unless legally barred from seeking re-election
- Incumbents are automatically granted the Reporting Waiver after an election once the committee's reported ending balance and debt balance are both below \$1,000
- Exempt from filing the January Campaign Statement



Candidate Committee Life Cycle

Register/Form Committee – Starting the Committee

- Required once individual meets definition of a candidate
- By filing original Statement of Organization

Active Candidate Committee – While the Committee is active

- Campaign Finance Requirements
- Participate in Elections
- Incumbent Officeholders
- Timeframe committee is active may contain multiple elections and election cycles

Dissolution of Candidate Committee – Eligible to dissolve when

- Candidate is barred from seeking re-election or has vacated office
- Disclosed the disbursement of all unexpended funds and assets
- Disclosed the payment or forgiveness of all debts
- Paid all late filing fees in full
- Filed all outstanding campaign statements, and
- Answered all outstanding Request for Clarification



Statement of Organizations – Due Dates and Fees

A committee must be formed within 10 days of meeting the definition of a candidate. Once the committee is formed, the Statement of Organization (SofO) must be filed within 10 days of the committee's formation date as defined in. MCL 169.224

- For example: A person meeting the definition of a candidate on May 1st must form their committee by May 11th and must file their Statement of Organization on or before May 21st.
- Late filing of the Statement of Organization may be assessed fees based on the formation date supplied.
- The fees accrue at \$10 per business day but do not exceed \$300.00.



Reporting Waiver

Section 24 of MCFA allows committees with limited financial activity to request a waiver from the requirement of file detailed campaign statements if the committee does not to receive or spend more than \$1,000.00.

- A committee must answer "Yes" in the reporting waiver section of the statement of organization
- Selecting "No" will require campaign statements to be filed regardless of the committee's financial activity
- Committees who have failed to file cannot retroactively request the waiver after a filing deadline

Exception: Candidate committees of incumbent judges and justices that qualify for a reporting waiver following an election or appointment are automatically granted the waiver.

The waiver does not exempt committees from filing:

- An original or amended SofO
- Late contribution reports



Losing & Regaining the Waiver

Losing the Reporting Waiver:

Once a reporting waiver has been obtained the committee's financial activity must still be recorded and tracked to monitor for the loss of the waiver:

- Once a committee spends/receives over the \$1,000 threshold the next campaign statement due of the committee must be filed
- All contributions both direct and in-kind (including those from the candidate), debts owed, and balances from previous elections count towards the threshold

Regaining the Reporting Waiver:

The committee can regain the reporting waiver by:

- Filing a campaign statement reporting an end balance and debt balance under the threshold
- Filing an amended SofO with "Yes" selected in the reporting waiver section of the form



Committee Treasurer Responsibilities – [MCL 169.222](#)

Important things to consider when selecting a Treasurer

- Availability to perform duties in a timely fashion
- Experience – have they ever acted as a treasurer for another committee?
- Knowledge of MCFA or a willingness to become familiar with the law
- Proficient at recording and tracking financial activity and balancing accounts
- Technical skills: ability to navigate the internet and have basic knowledge of computer software
- Assumes legal responsibility for the committee
- Must sign the original Statement of Organization and most amendments
- Keeps accounts, records, bills, receipts, and electronic files for 5 years
- Authorizes contributions received and expenditures made by the committee
- Timely filing
- Respond to Notices of Error or Omission and Late Filing Fee notices

A treasurer or other individual designated as responsible for the committee's record keeping, report preparation, or report filing who knowingly violates this section is subject to a civil fine of not more than \$1,000.00.



Campaign Finance Schedule

Statement	Owed in Years Where:	Close of Books	Statement Due
January	Non-Incumbent candidate has an active committee	December 31	January 31
July	The candidate does not seek election	July 20	July 25
October	The candidate does not seek election	October 20	October 25
Pre-Election	The candidate seeks election	16 days before election	11 days before election
Post-Election	The candidate seeks election	20 days after election	30 days after election
48 Hour/LCR	The candidate seeks election	NA	Within 48 hours of Receipt
Post-Election Compliance Affidavit	Candidate is elected	NA	Before assuming office



Campaign Statement Exemptions

Annual Exemptions:

- Committee of an Incumbent Judge.
- Committee filing a Post-Election due December the previous year prior to the Annual deadline.

Post-Election Compliance Exemption:

- Spent or Received \$1,000.00 or less during the election cycle.

Reporting Waiver Provision:

- Committees maintaining a Reporting Waiver
- Does NOT exempt requirement of original and amended SoFO
- Does NOT exempt requirements of Late Contribution Reports

Reporting Waiver:

- Requested and qualified for waiver by selecting YES on the SoFO
- To qualify, a committee must report ending balance and debt of \$1,000.00 or less.



Campaign Statements – Timely Filing

Avoid Late Filing Fees by Filing Statements Timely!

Campaign Statements can be filed between the close of books and the deadline

Electronic Filers or more must be successfully uploaded on or before the deadline

Paper Filers must be sent certified, registered or overnight and postmarked the appropriate number of days defined in MCL 169.216(9)

Annual Statement Fees:

- Committee who raised **more** than \$10,000.00 in the previous 2 years are assessed a fee of \$50.00/business day – maximum \$1,000.00
- Committee who raised **less** than \$10,000.00 in the previous 2 years are assessed a fee of \$25.00/business day – maximum \$500.00

Pre/Post Election, July and October Fees:

- Committee who raised **less** than \$10,000.00 in the previous 2 years are assessed a fee of \$25.00/business day – maximum \$500.00
- Committee who raised **more** than \$10,000.00 in the previous 2 years are assessed a fee of \$50.00/business day – maximum \$1,000.00
 - Day 1-3 \$25.00/business day
 - Day 4-10 \$50.00/business day
 - Day 11-16 \$100.00/business day
 - Maximum \$1,000.00



Good Cause for Late Campaign Statements

A committee may request a waiver of late filing fee for “Good Cause” as defined below:

- An incapacitating physical illness, hospitalization, accident involvement, death, or incapacitation for medical reasons of a person required to file, a person whose participation is essential to the preparation of the statement or report, or a member of the immediate family of these persons
- Other unique, unintentional factors beyond the filer’s control not stemming from a negligent or a non-cation so that a reasonably prudent person would excuse the filing on a temporary basis. These factors include the loss or unavailability of records due to a fire, flood, theft, or similar reason and difficulties related to the transmission of the filing to the filing official, such as exceptionally bad weather or strikes involving transportation systems



Contribution Limits Per Election Cycle – [MCL 169.252](#)

Contributor	250,001	85,001 – 250,000	85,000 or less
	Population or more Individual or Political Committee \$8,325	Population or more Individual or Political Committee \$2,450	Population or more Individual or Political Committee \$1,225
Office	Independent Committee or Political Party Committee \$83,250	Independent Committee or Political Party Committee \$24,500	Independent Committee or Political Party Committee \$12,250
Court of Appeals	All Districts 1-4		
Circuit Courts	Circuits: 3, 6, 7, 9, 16, 17, 20, 22, 30	Circuits: 2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14, 18, 29, 31, 37, 38, 39, 40, 44, 48, 56	All other Circuit Courts
District Courts	Districts: 8, 36, 41A, 58, 63	Districts: 1, 2A, 5, 10, 12, 14A, 15, 16, 19, 33, 34, 35, 37, 41B, 46, 47, 48, 52-1, 52-2, 52-3, 52-4, 53, 54A, 55, 56A, 57, 60, 61, 67-4, 70-2, 71A, 72, 74, 86	All other District Courts
Probate Courts	Genesee, Ingham, Kalamazoo, Kent, Macomb, Oakland, Ottawa, Washtenaw, Wayne	a, Washtenaw, Wayne Allegan, Bay, Berrien, Calhoun, Eaton, Grand Traverse, Jackson, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, Muskegon, Saginaw, St. Clair	All other Probate Courts
Probate District Courts	All Probate Districts: 5 (Alger & Schoolcraft) 6 (Luce & Mackinac) 7 (Charlevoix & Emmet) 17 (Clare & Gladwin) 18 (Mecosta & Osceola)		
Municipal Courts	All Municipal Courts: Grosse Pointe Grosse Pointe Farms Grosse Pointe Park Grosse Pointe Woods		

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Election Cycle – [MCL 169.205\(3\)](#)

MCFA establishes contribution limits for all elective candidates and are based on election cycle.

The Act defines two types of election cycles

Regular election cycle begins on the day following a general election in which the office involved appears on the ballot and ends on the day of the next general election in which the office appears on the ballot

Special election cycle begins on the day the special election is scheduled or the date the office involved became vacant and ends on the day of the special election

General Election 2026

Office	Cycle	Election Cycle Begins	Election Cycle Ends
Supreme Court	8-year cycle	11/7/2018	11/3/2026
Court of Appeals Circuit Court District Court Probate Court	6-year cycle	11/4/2020	11/3/2026

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Filing Electronically – Michigan Transparency Network (MiTN)

Committees that spend or receive \$5,000.00 or more are required to file electronically. Committees may elect to file electronically voluntarily.

The Michigan Transparency Network also known as MiTN (pronounced Mitten) is a free web-based platform provided by the MDOS Bureau of Elections.

The MiTN platform is used to file and manage committee filing functions such as original and amended SoFOs, campaign statements, late contribution reporting, receiving and creating correspondence, view and pay fees/payments

Users who hold official committee roles (such as Treasurer/Record Keeper) or data entry must create an MiLogin account to access the MiTN platform. For more training or additional questions on the MiTN platform please visit the campaign finance disclosure page.



Campaign Statement Contents

MCFA requires campaign statements to include a detailed report of the committee's financial activity.

Cover Page: Identifies the committee's name, address, treasurer/recordkeeper (same information reported on the SoFO). The statement name and coverage date.

Summary Page: Displays a summary of financial activity during the reporting period and election cycle including debt and ending balance.

Receipts/Expense: Details itemized receipts and expenses reported during the statement coverage dates.

Debt & Obligations: Outstanding debt owed by or to the committee.

Fundraiser: Events held by the committee reporting total receipts and expenses for the event.

Cover page
Summary Page
Receipts

- Direct
- Direct Loan
- Other Receipts
- In-Kind
- In-Kind Loan

Expenses

- Direct
- In-Kind
- Incidental Office
- Get-Out-The-Vote



Itemized Receipts & Required Information

Direct Contributions: Contribution of money from any legal source such as individual, self (candidate), or immediate family

Direct Loans: Monetary loan from any legal source such as individual, self (candidate), or immediate family

Other Receipts: Monies received by committee not contributions such as refunds, rebates, interest

Other Receipts Loans: Loan made by a financial institution

In-Kind Contributions: Contribution of goods, services and facilities provided to the committee at no cost or at a discount

In-Kind Contributions Loans: Reimbursement to candidate or others for in-kind contribution

Required Receipt Information

- Name of contributor
- Amount of contribution
- Contributor address
- Date received as defined by MCFA 21(11)
- Occupation/Employer name and address as single or cumulative contribution from individual of \$100.01 or more
- Fundraiser name if received at fundraising event held by committee
- Description/Purpose for In-kind contribution and Other Receipts (if not interest or refund/rebate)
- Vendor name if in-kind contribution was purchased
- Loan, such as loan from candidate



Receipts – Acceptable and Exceptions

Acceptable

- A candidate committee may accept contributions of money from legal sources in cash (\$20.00 or less), check, money order or credit cards
- A committee may accept loans from individuals, Independent Committees, Political Committees, Political Party Committees within the contribution limits
- Financial institution loan received by a committee which is endorsed or guaranteed by a third party means the third party is liable for the amount loaned
- Contributions from Out-of-State Groups, see Appendix K for more information on out-of-state groups
- Contribution from another candidate committee for the purpose of a fundraiser ticket and can not exceed \$100.00 in that calendar year

See the [Candidate Committee manual](#) for additional information on acceptable contributions

Exceptions

- Volunteer's personal services not reimbursed
- Volunteer's travel and lodging up to \$500.00/year
- Individual's donation of food and beverages up to \$1000.00/year
- Contribution not deposited and returned within 30 days



48 Hour – Late Contribution Reports – [MCL 169.232](#)

MCFA requires certain reports to be filed immediately upon receipt. Candidate Committees that receive \$500.00 or more from the same person between the day following the close of books of the last campaign statement required to be filed by the committee and the 3rd day before the date of any election in which the candidate is participating. This includes direct contributions, loans, in-kind contribution of goods/services and contributions from the candidate to their committee. The \$500.00 can be one contribution or a cumulative within in the LCR coverage period.

Examples for a candidate participating in a general election and is required to file late contributions from 10/21 – 11/3

- Contributor A gives \$600.00 on 10/21 – An LCR **is** required within 48 hours upon receipt.
- Contributor B gives \$400.00 on 10/21 – An LCR is **not** required
- Contributor B gives another \$100.00 on 10/25 – An LCR **is** required with a cumulative of \$500.00
- Contributor B gives yet another \$300.00 on 11/1 – An LCR **is** required with a cumulative of \$800.00

Definition of “received date”: Date the committee actually obtains possession or control of the contribution.

- Checks: Received date is the day the committee physically receives the envelope, not when it was opened or deposited
- Online/Credit Card Contributions: Date the contributor submits the contribution
- In person: Date the contribution was handed to the committee member



48 Hour – Late Contribution Filing Fees

Late filing fees assessed for Late Contribution Reports can be a bit more excessive than regular statements.

Fees accrued as follows:

- \$25.00/business days 1-3
- \$50.00/business days 4-10
- \$100.00/business days 11-26

Although the fees are accrued at a daily rate, the maximum fee can not exceed the total amount of contributions omitted from the late contribution reports or a maximum of \$2,000.00

Example: A LCR with 3 contributions on the same date that required to be filed total \$750.00, and exceed the 26 days late the fee should not exceed \$750.00



Prohibited Receipts

- Anonymous Contributions
- Cash over \$20.00
- Earmarking
- Excess
- Foreign Nationals
- In the name of another
- Corporations, Joint Stock Companies, Labor Organizations, Domestic Dependent Sovereigns (Indian tribes)
- Casino Interest Holders
- Casino Licensee
- Supplier Licensee
- Investment Fiduciary Subject to P.A. 347 of 2012 (pay to play)
- Solicitation and acceptance by Separate Segregated Funds

See the [Candidate Committee manual](#) for additional information on prohibited contributions



Itemized Expenses and Required Information

Direct Expenses: Tangible monetary value spent by the committee to influence the nomination or election of the candidate or qualification, passage or defeat of a ballot question and payments to debts incurred

In-Kind Expenses: Fair market value or usual rental charge of goods, services and facilities donated

Get-Out-the-Vote Expenses: Expenses made for election day activities

Incidental Expenses (Officeholders Only): Ordinary and necessary expenses paid or incurred in carrying out business of an elective office

Required Information

- Name of payee, vendor
- Amount
- Payee address
- Date of payment or promise to pay (credit card, invoice etc.)
- Fundraiser name if spent at fundraising event held by committee
- Description/Purpose of expense (be specific)
- Itemizations payee paid to third party on behalf of committee



Prohibited Expenses

- Lend funds to another Candidate Committee
- Lend funds to the candidate or to any other person
- Make an expenditure to or on behalf of another Candidate Committee
- Purchase ads in other candidate's program books
- Pay debt from a previous election without meeting the requirements of section 52(6) of MCFA
- Contribute to Legal Defense Fund; including the candidate's own legal defense fund

See the [Candidate Committee manual](#) for additional information on prohibited expenses



Fundraisers & Joint Fundraisers

Fundraiser:

A fundraiser is an event such as a dinner, reception, auction or similar event where contributions are solicited by the purchase of a ticket, donation or purchase of goods or services. All contributions and expenditures for a fundraising vent must be reported in detail on the appropriate fundraiser schedule

Joint Fundraisers:

- Committees must sign a written agreement outlining percent of share and method of handling expenditures
- Most establish a joint account (secondary depository) and submit an amendment to each committee's SoFO
- Additional recording and reporting requirements
- Advertisements and invitations must specify it is a joint fundraiser and include required information for all participants

Gambling/Game of Chance or other activities that require licensing are prohibited. Please contact Michigan Gaming Control Board for additional questions.



Identification Requirements & Exemptions

Section 47 of the MCFA requires that all printed matter, radio or television paid advertisement that refers to an election must have an identification statement.

- Printed matter: "Paid for by (committee name, address)
- Robo calls: Pre-recorded messages shall contain name, phone number, address or other contact for person paying for the message
- Mass mailings: Any mailing by U.S. mail or fax of 500 or more pieces of identical or similar nature within any 30-day period
- Radio or television: Must identify person sponsoring the ad; as required by the FCC

[Appendix J](#) of the committee manuals lists items that are exempt from the identification requirement rule.



Identification Requirements & Exemptions (cont'd)

Section 47 of the MCFA requires that all printed matter, radio or television paid advertisement that refers to an election, candidate or ballot question have an identification statement

- Printed matter: "Paid for by (committee name, address)
- Robo calls: prerecorded messages shall contain name, phone number, address or other contact for person paying for the message
- Mass mailings: Any mailing by U.S. mail or facsimile of 500 or more pieces of identical or similar nature within any 30-day period
- Radio or television: Must identify person sponsoring the ad; as required by the FCC

EXAMPLE: Paid for with Regulated Funds by The Dairy Farmers PAC, 123 Main St. Lansing, MI 48918



Items Exempt from Identification

Aerial Banners	Ashtrays	Badges & Badge Holders	Ballons
Bingo Chips	Brushes	Bumper Stickers (4"x15" or smaller)	Buttons
Campaign Sticker (3"x1 ½" or smaller)	Candy Wrappers (1 ½"x2 ½" or smaller)	Cigarette Lighters	Cloth Potholders
Clothes Pins	Clothing	Coasters	Combs
Cups	Drinking Glasses	Earrings	Emery Boards
Envelopes	Erasers	Fortune Cookie Messages (1/2"x2" or smaller)	Frisbees
Glasses	Golf Balls	Golf Tees	Hats
Horns	Ice Scrapers	Jar Lid Grippers (5" or smaller)	Key Rings
Knives	Labels	Lapel Pins/Stickers	Magnifying Glasses
Matchbooks	Nail Clippers	Nail Files	Noisemakers
Paper & Plastic Cups	Paper & Plastic Plates	Paper Weights	Pencils
Pendants	Pennants	Pens	Pinwheels
Plastic Tableware	Pocket Protectors	Potholders	Refrigerator Magnets
Ribbons	Shoehorns	Staple Removers	Sunglasses
Sun Visors	Sweatshirts	Swizzle Sticks	T-Shirts
TV Scroll	Whistles	Wooden Nickels (Approx size of a 5-cent coin)	Wooden Ruler (12' or smaller)



Correspondence to Committee

Notices of Failure to File – Committee are notified within 4 business days when required filing are not submitted. The failure to file is referred to the Attorney General's office between the 9th and 12th business day following the deadline.

Late Fees – When a statement is not filed on time based on the filing schedule under MCFA

- Unpaid fees are referred to the State treasurer for collection
- Fees may be appealed for "good cause"

Error or Omission – Committees are notified when clarification or corrects are needed. The committee's lac of response to an Error or Omission is referred to the Attorney General between the 9th and 12th business day following the due date.



Campaign Finance Complaints

- All complaints alleging violations of MCFA are filed with the Secretary of State's Bureau of Elections
- All complaints MUST be submitted using the complain form available on the bureau's website
- Anonymous complaints are not accepted
- All parties will be given written notification regarding the disposition of the complaint
- Questions regarding complain process will be direct to the Regulatory section within the Bureau



Declaratory Rulings & Interpretive Statements

- Interested parties may request clarification of MCFA by requesting a declaratory ruling. The department would issue a ruling only if the person provided actual statements of fact
- Declaratory rulings are binding on all parties and carry the force of law
- If the department declines to issue a declaratory ruling, an interpretive statement will be issued
- The regulatory section of the bureau provides response to request
Time frames are outlined in any committee manual
- Previous rulings in full text are available on the bureau website



Thank you!

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF ELECTIONS
Campaign Finance Section**

Email: CampaignFinance@Michigan.gov

Web Site:

www.Michigan.gov/sos/elections/Disclosure/cfr

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