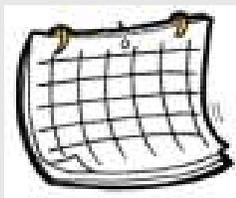


Campaign Finance News



Maryland State Board of Elections, 151 West Street, Suite 200, Annapolis, MD 21401 410-269-2880 Volume 9, Summer/Fall 2006



Important Dates

October 17, 2006 -
ELECTrack EFS training class

October 27, 2006 -
Pre-General Campaign
Finance Report due
(transaction period is from
August 28 to October 22)

November 1, 2006 -
Deadline for Write-in
Candidates to file a
Certificate of Candidacy

November 7, 2006 -
General Election
Polls open 7am - 8pm

November 28, 2006 -
Post General Campaign
Finance Report
(transaction period from
October 23 to November 21)

January 17, 2007 -
Annual Report
(transaction period from
November 22, 2006 to
January 10, 2007)

EARLY VOTING - CANCELLED

On August 25, 2006, the Maryland Court of Appeals upheld a ruling of an Anne Arundel County Circuit Court judge that early voting violates the *Constitution of Maryland*. As a result of this court ruling, any eligible voter who planned on voting during early voting must either vote in his or her assigned polling place on November 7th or vote by absentee ballot.

ELECTrack EFS

What Version should you have?

All campaign finance entities that use the State Supplied ELECTrack EFS software should be using either Version 4.5 Second Edition or Version 4.7, which was released in July 2006. Version 4.7 can be downloaded from our website.

The State Board of Elections is constantly improving the ELECTrack EFS software and welcomes any and all suggestions from the users of the program. If you have a suggestion or request for an improvement or modification to the software, please email your suggestions or requests to vmolina@elections.state.md.us or call 410-269-2880.

Correcting Errors

Prior to filing the report

If you have made a mistake, ELECTrack EFS will allow you to correct the error. For example, if you have entered the wrong amount of a contribution, go to the report entry screen and select the report that contains the error. Then select "Receipts." The receipts window defaults to the "Find/Add" mode so you will have to click the "Edit" button on the top of the window. Next locate the item you want to edit by searching for it using the magnifying glass next to "Item Number." Once you have located the item, edit it and then click the save icon.

Certain fields on the summary page are grayed out and cannot be edited. This is because they are fields that are calculated based on the data reported in the body of the report. Accordingly, to change a number in one of those fields, you will have to change the data entered in the body of the report. Other fields that are not grayed out can simply be edited and then saved.

After the report has been filed

When you need to correct deficiencies or add or change information in a previously exported report, you will need to file an amendment. To create an amendment, first select the report you wish to edit. A message will appear, "Has this report been sent to the State Board of Elections." Click "yes" and ELECTrack will automatically generate the amendment number and then save. Prior to exporting an amendment, ELECTrack EFS will compare the contents of the amended report with the most recent version of the same report. ELECTrack EFS will generate a detailed line-by-line report outlining the differences. The Amendment Review Report requires the signature of the responsible officers to be considered filed.

Database Management

As you already know, ELECTrack EFS has a feature that allows you to backup your database. It is recommended that all treasurers backup their data each time they close the program. For example, when you close the program, ELECTrack will ask if you want to backup your data. Select "yes" and then save the database to your hard drive. SBE recommends periodically saving the backup file onto a disk or CD.



Announcement:

CCF welcome Karen Simpson as the new Deputy Director. She is a valuable resource of knowledge and looks forward to working with you.



Sign Up for Updates Electronically:

If you wish to receive this publication and other updates in the future via email, please call the Campaign Finance Division, 410-269-2880, with your email address or register your email address at CCF@elections.state.md.us. Thank you.



Contacting the Division of Candidacy and Campaign Finance:

Phone: 410-269-2880 or 800-222-8683 ext 4
Help Desk: 410-269-2840 x 6 or 800-222-8683 x 6
Website: www.electionsmaryland.com
Email: CCF@elections.state.md.us

A number of campaign accounts have had the unfortunate experience of losing their databases due to a computer crash or other circumstances. In many cases, the data has not been backed up. When this situation arises, SBE can rebuild the committee's database from the data that the account has filed for a fee of \$50.00. This is a very lengthy and time-consuming process and will not relieve the committee of its requirements to timely file the next schedule campaign finance report.

Transmitting Your Data via the Internet (FTP)

If you choose to send your data to SBE using the FTP process in ELECTTrack, the program should automatically start up your Internet connection. If this does not happen, connect to the Internet and then, while the connection is running, execute the export process. Once this is complete, a *Transmittal Sheet* will be generated. The transmittal sheet will provide documentation of the fact that your transmission was successful. Please keep a copy of the transmittal sheet for your records. The original transmittal sheet signed by the chairman and treasurer for a political committee and a candidate and treasurer for a personal treasurer entity must be filed with SBE within the next 10 business days, otherwise your report will be considered deficient and late fees may be assessed.

When problems occur they almost always fall in one of the following two categories:

1. User IDs & Passwords. Each campaign finance entity has been assigned an account number by our office. This number is also the user ID used by the FTP server to authenticate its users. IDs always comprise the letter 'A', in upper case, followed by one to four digits. A common mistake is to add the activation code to this user ID. Please be sure not to add anything after your account/user ID. Our FTP server will not recognize your account/user ID if it deviates even slightly from the established format. Passwords suffer from the same kind of problem. They have to be entered exactly as they were assigned to you. Keep in mind that the passwords are all lowercase, so make sure the "Caps Lock" key is not activated.
2. Firewalls. Firewalls are a type of software designed to isolate a computer or a network of computers from other networks, including the Internet. If you cannot connect to our server, check to see if your computer's firewall is active. If so, turn off the firewall and then resubmit.

There is additional information available on the SBE website regarding filing your reports via the Internet. The site includes specific information for filers who do not use ELECTTrack and want to file via the Internet. The information can be found by clicking on "Electronic transfer help" at http://www.elections.state.md.us/campaign_finance/electronic_filing/index.html.

Reporting Your Cash Balance

Your Campaign Finance Report must disclose all transactions, i.e. money received, deposited and spent, by the political committee. ELECTTrack EFS calculates the committee's cash balance of the Summary Sheet based on the report entries. In order to ensure accuracy of the Cash on Hand balance, SBE requires the treasurer to input the committee's bank account number and the bank balance as of the ending transaction date of the report period.

If the report calculated cash balance does not equal your bank account balance, either your report is incorrect, or you did not indicate the correct bank account balance.

1. Reporting Your Bank Account Balance. A common area of confusion is how to account for checks received and written by the campaign that are still in the process of clearing as of the ending transaction date. For example, the committee's bank statement shows a balance of \$1,000 on the day *before* the ending transaction date. The committee receives a \$250 contribution the next day. The contribution should be reported and the \$250 should be added to the bank balance (making it \$ 1,250). The same approach applies to checks written on the report ending transaction date. If the expenditure is shown on the report, then the appropriate reduction in the bank balance shown should be made.



Classes

October 17, 2006 -
6pm-8pm
State Board of Elections
Annapolis, MD

This class is on using the ELECTrack EFS software. It will go over how to enter, edit and file a report.

If you are planning to attend, please RVSP by calling 1-800-222-8683 ext. 4 or 410-269-2880.

Directions to the State Board of Elections office are available online at www.electionsmaryland.com

Please check the website for future classes.

Maryland State Board of Elections

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*Director of Candidacy
& Campaign Finance*

2. *Negative Cash Balance but with a Positive Bank Balance.* This is a common mistake. The treasurer needs to report all monies spent in connection with the campaign. A common situation, for example, is the candidate using personal funds to pay for campaign signs and then the treasurer only lists the purchase of signs as an expenditure. The treasurer needs also to record the candidate's money as either an in kind contribution or a loan. A committee may not have a negative cash balance.
3. *Checking Your Report.* If your bank balance still does not equal your cash balance, you will need to carefully check your entire report. Using your most recent bank statement, match the deposits listed on your statement to the receipts entered on the report and then do the same with expenditures. Since the report functions like a check register, the items listed should match, and the net totals from the bank account should agree. The problem may exist in previously filed reports, and thus correcting the problem requires filing an amendment.

Money Spent By Candidates

Maryland Law does not limit the amount of money that a candidate or the candidate's spouse may contribute to the candidate's own campaign. However, the spending must be done through the campaign finance entity in one of the following ways:

1. **Contribution** - the candidate or the candidate's spouse can simply contribute money to the campaign committee. The committee can then use those funds to conduct campaign activities.
2. **In-kind contribution** - the candidate can spend personal funds to purchase an item needed for the campaign. The candidate can then give the item to the campaign committee. The campaign committee then reports the item as an in kind contribution from the candidate.
3. **Loan** - if the candidate wants to be repaid when funds become available, he or she must report the money given to the campaign committee as a loan. Candidate loans do not have to charge interest and do not have to be paid back within any set period of time. Once the money is loaned, the committee can then spend it as necessary.
4. **Reimbursement**- the candidate can pay for a campaign expense from personal funds and have the money spent reimbursed from the campaign committee. In order to do this, there must be funds available to cover the reimbursement within the same reporting period.

Closing a Campaign Finance Entity

After the general election, many campaign finance entities may want to or be required to close. All non-continuing entities, i.e. personal treasurers, are required to close with the Post-General campaign finance report due on November 28, 2006. To close the account, you will need to file a "final" report. A final report is any Campaign Finance Report that you mark final. The check off box for "final" is on the Summary Sheet upper left-hand corner in ELECTrack EFS.

It is important to note that your account is not closed unless you receive notification from the election office, otherwise you owe the next scheduled campaign finance report. The election office will close an account if:

1. There is a zero cash balance and no deficits, outstanding debts, or outstanding loans (including loans from the candidate); and
2. There are no outstanding reports due.

After the election regardless of the outcome, a noncontinuing committee is required to dispose of any remaining cash balance as surplus funds in the statutory prescribed ways under Election Law Article §13-247.

A non-continuing account may not be used to support any future campaign activity. The only reason a non-continuing account may continue to raise money and spend money is for the purpose of paying off outstanding obligations. Once the debt has been satisfied, the account must close.

ELECTrack User Manual

If you still have problems filing, there is a comprehensive written User Manual for ELECTrack EFS Version 4.5 Second Edition available on the SBE website. Additionally, a copy of the User Manual on CD can be mailed to you upon request.

New Partnership Announced

SBE is pleased to announce a partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) in the creation of the Maryland Voter Information Clearinghouse, an independent, non-political and non-partisan website dedicated to providing information to residents and voters in Maryland that will help them make their voting decisions. The website, <http://mdelections.umbc.edu/index.html>, offers an enhanced candidate list including a biography and statement from the candidate and has the ability for voters to locate their polling place and check their voter registration, as well as hosting a campaign finance database. UMBC has made the search engine more user-friendlier. We hope you will use and enjoy the new site. If you are having difficulties, you can contact The Maryland Voter Information Clearinghouse at 410-455-1085 or e-mail mdelections@umbc.edu.

On Election Day, Leave Only Footprints...

After the recent Primary Election, we received numerous complaints about the number of campaign signs and trash left at polling places and the general disregard for property outside of the 100 foot “no electioneering” zone. It is a challenge for the local boards of elections to find accessible polling places, and we do not want to lose polling places because of the damage and trash left behind on Election Day. Please instruct all individuals working at the polls on a candidate’s behalf to pick up all trash and campaign signs when the polls close and to respect the polling place’s property.