
LOS ANGELES CITY ETHICS COMMISSION

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**SEVEN PIPE TRADES PACS CHARGED WITH VIOLATING CITY CONTRIBUTION
LIMITS FOR INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURE ACTIVITY**

Probable cause exists to believe that Plumbers Local No. 78 PAC violated Los Angeles City law in six instances during the 2005 runoff election by accepting contributions ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000, in excess of the limit established by the Los Angeles City Charter, according to a public Accusation issued today by Los Angeles City Ethics Commission Executive Director LeeAnn Pelham. The Accusation charges that Plumbers Local No. 78 PAC, a non-candidate controlled committee that raised funds and made an independent expenditure to oppose then mayoral candidate Robert Hertzberg during the City's 2005 runoff, violated Charter Section 470(c)(5) and LAMC Section 49.7.24 by accepting contributions in excess of the City's voter-established \$500 limit on contributions to committees that support or oppose candidates for City office. The Accusation issued today also charges six other pipe trades PACs with making contributions to Plumbers Local No. 78 PAC in excess of limits established in Charter Section 470(c)(5).

The six committees charged with making an excess contribution to Plumbers Local No. 78 PAC are: Pipe Trades District Council #36 PAC; Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 447 Political Fund; Plumbers & Steamfitters Local Union No. 761 PAC; P&S Local No. 467 State Political Action Fund; Southern California Pipe Trades District Council #16 PAC; and Steamfitters & Refrigeration U.A. Local 250 PAC.

Charter § 470(c)(5) provides that "no person shall make to any committee (other than the candidate's controlled committee) which supports or opposes any candidate for Mayor, City Attorney, Controller or City Council, and no such committee shall accept from any such person a contribution or contributions totaling more than five hundred dollars (\$500) in any calendar year." LAMC § 49.7.24 prohibits "[a]ny person or committee who makes independent expenditures supporting or opposing a candidate [from accepting] any contribution in excess of the amounts set forth in Charter § 470(c)(5)." On November 24, the Federal Court in Los Angeles upheld the voter-established contribution limit for non-candidate controlled committees in Charter Section 470(c)(5), denying a request in *Working Californians v. City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles City Ethics Commission* to prevent the City from enforcing the law.

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The Accusation was announced today following Pelham's finding of probable cause and according to public disclosure procedures required by City law. The matter will now go to the agency's five-member Ethics Commission for an administrative hearing to determine if a violation occurred. Procedurally, the Commission may 1) conduct its own hearing, 2) hear the matter itself with a hearing officer presiding, or 3) refer the matter to a hearing officer for a preliminary recommendation. City Charter Section 706(c) authorizes the Commission to levy fines of up to \$5,000 for each violation or three times the amount improperly reported, unlawfully contributed, expended, given, or received, whichever is greater. As in all cases referred to the Commission for an administrative hearing, the respondents are presumed innocent of any violation of City law, unless and until such time that the violation is proved in an administrative hearing held pursuant to Charter Section 706 (c).

The Commission and its staff may not comment on this matter until after a final determination has been made. A copy of the Accusation can be obtained by calling the Commission at (213) 978-1960.

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The City Ethics Commission is a semi-independent agency created by Los Angeles voters in 1990 to impartially administer and enforce the governmental ethics, campaign finance, and lobbying laws of the City of Los Angeles. With a staff of 24 and an operating budget of \$2.2 million, the Commission conducts training, provides advice, audits political campaigns, and makes legislative recommendations. It also is authorized by the voters to conduct investigations and levy administrative penalties against violators of the laws under its jurisdiction. More information on the Commission and its mandate is available at <http://ethics.lacity.org>.