
2017 City Elections—Campaign Communications

This is a brief overview of some of the City and state laws that apply to City elections. Anyone who participates in City elections is responsible for complying with all applicable laws.

Disclosure

A candidate who makes or distributes a campaign communication to 200 or more persons must disclose the communication by filing an electronic copy with the Ethics Commission using its Campaign Electronic Filing System (CEFS).

From November 7, 2016, through May 16, 2017, a campaign communication must be filed within 24 hours after it is first distributed. At other times, the communication must be filed within five business days.

Generally, a copy of the mailer or script must be provided. If the communication is recorded, an electronic copy of the recording or video file must also be provided. These copies must also be filed using CEFS.

Disclaimers

Campaign communications paid for by a candidate or candidate committee must include the following disclaimer:

"Paid for by [candidate or committee name, address, and city]. Additional information is available at ethics.lacity.org."

When 200 or more copies of a campaign communication are mailed in envelopes, the outside of the envelopes must identify the candidate's name and address.

For small electronic ads where the full disclaimer is impractical, an abbreviated disclaimer may be used. At a minimum, it must include the words "Paid for by [the committee identification number provided by the state's Fair Political Practices Commission]". When a user interacts with the communication, the full disclaimer must be provided in an easily legible and identifiable format, such as through a rollover, a pop-up, or on the landing page of a linked Web site or application.

There are specific requirements for the size and placement of disclaimers, which are detailed in the 2017 City Candidate Guide.

Social Media

Candidates and candidate committees that use social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) to communicate about the election must include the following statement on each account's home or main page:

"This account is being used for campaign purposes by [name of candidate or committee]."

Individual messages sent from social media accounts (tweets, posts, etc.) are not required to have a disclaimer. However if the message includes a link to a campaign communication or Web site, the linked communication or Web site must include the appropriate disclaimers.

Liability

Late penalties of \$25 per day, up to \$500, apply to required filings. In addition, a person who violates the City's campaign finance laws may be subject to an administrative enforcement action and a potential fine of the greater of \$5,000 per violation or three times the amount of money at issue. The principal officers of a committee are liable for the actions of their committees. A committee's principal officers include the candidate, the treasurer, and any other person who is primarily responsible for approving the committee's political activity. Possible violations may be reported to the Ethics Commission's whistleblower hotline at (800) 824-4825.

Contact Information

Please contact us at (213) 978-1960 with any campaign finance questions or needs.