Guide to Campaign Finance & Political Contributions

There are a number of independent groups, government boards and commissions who provide information and data on campaign finance and individual political contributions. The following is an alphabetical listing of resources including links to searchable databases and information. Please send any questions/suggestions/feedback to journalism@libraries.cul.columbia.edu!

Federal Election Commission (http://www.fec.gov/)

The Federal Election Commission (FEC), established in 1975, administers and enforces the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), which governs the financing of federal elections. Campaign finance information is available, through the Disclosure Data Search (http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/disclosure_data_search.shtml), searchable by individual contributors, committee contributors/recipients, and candidate name.

Additional links to note!

- What is a political action committee (PAC)? (http://www.fec.gov/ans/answers_pac.shtml#pac)
- PACronyms, December 2009 (http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/pacronyms/Pacronyms.pdf)
Follow the Money (http://www.followthemoney.org/)

Provided by the nonpartisan National Institute on Money in State Politics, Follow the Money is a database of campaign money on state-level elections and public policy in all 50 states. Various tools, charts, and reports are provided to assist you in understanding the data, including Sleuth, Lobbyist Link, Industry Influence, Pulse, and Timeline. Get started at My District (http://www.followthemoney.org/database/mydistrict.phtml) for state and local campaign finance information or use the Explore tab (http://www.followthemoney.org/database/index.phtml) for a number of useful tools.

**Additional links to note!**

- **Research & Reports** tab for the latest reports, searchable by subject (http://www.followthemoney.org/Research/index.phtml)
- **Who's Using Our Data?** lists recent news organizations using data provided by Follow the Money (http://www.followthemoney.org/Newsroom/whos_using_data.phtml)
- **Advanced Search** (http://www.followthemoney.org/database/advancedsearch.phtml)
- RSS feeds available for data on each district profile page


MoneyLine from Congressional Quarterly (CQ) provides information and news from multiple sources, including FEC, IRS, House and Senate on money in politics. **Special note:** **not all searches are freely available through this resource; subscription required.**

![MoneyLine screenshot](https://moneyline.cq.com)

**Additional links to note!**

The NYC Campaign Finance Board (CFB) is a nonpartisan, independent city agency created in 1988 to administer the Campaign Finance Program, which educates voters about candidates, contributions, etc. The CFB searchable database (http://www.nyccfb.info/searchabledb/) allows you to search by election cycle, candidate, contributor name, amount of contribution, date of contribution, contributor employer, etc.

Additional links to note!

- Press tab (http://www.nyccfb.info/press/)
- Subscribe via email to Full Disclosure, CFB’s monthly newsletter (http://www.nyccfb.info/contact/newsletteremail.aspx); see also back issues (http://www.nyccfb.info/press/news/full_disclosure/index.htm)

New York State Board of Elections (http://www.elections.state.ny.us/)
The NYS Board of Elections was established in 1974 to administer elections in the State of New York, including the regulation of disclosures in campaign practice. The contributions and expenditures disclosure database (http://www.elections.state.ny.us/contribandexpend.html) is searchable by a variety of contribution and expenditure aspects and contains all financial disclosure statements filed with the Board of Elections from July 1999 to the present. The Board of Elections also has election law information, election results, and enrollment statistics.

Additional links to note!

- Election Law (http://www.elections.state.ny.us/ElectionLaw.html) information for New York State
- Contribution and receipt limitations (http://www.elections.state.ny.us/Contributions.html#Limits)
- Commissioner’s Meetings transcriptions available (http://www.elections.state.ny.us/CommissionersMeetings.html)

OpenSecrets (http://www.opensecrets.org/)

Provided by the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) – a nonpartisan and independent research group, OpenSecrets.org is a clearinghouse of data, including detailed contribution profiles, fund-raising breakdowns for federal party committees, and personal finances of members of Congress, the president and other officials. See the Politicians & Elections menu for data, e.g. search politicians by specific Congress, going back 10 years –http://www.opensecrets.org/politicians/index.php.
Additional links to note!

- **Personal Finance Disclosures** for congressional members and top officials in the executive branch ([http://www.opensecrets.org/pfds/](http://www.opensecrets.org/pfds/))
- **PACs** – contributions by and donations to, broken down by sector ([http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/](http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/))
- **Foreign-connected PACs** – PACs formed by American divisions of foreign companies ([http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/foreign.php](http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/foreign.php))
- **Leadership PACs** – politicians raising money for other politicians ([http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/industry.php?txt=Q03&cycle=2010](http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/industry.php?txt=Q03&cycle=2010))
- **Donor Lookup** – find individual and soft money contributors ([http://www.opensecrets.org/indivs/](http://www.opensecrets.org/indivs/))
- **National Donor Profiles** – mashup of federal and state donations for top 10,000 national contributors ([http://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/index_stfed.php](http://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/index_stfed.php))
- **Interest groups political contributions** ([http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/](http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/))
- **Subscribe via email to e-newsletter** ([http://www.opensecrets.org/MyOS/](http://www.opensecrets.org/MyOS/))


The IRS has a number of pages devoted to the filing requirements, exemptions, and tax code pertaining to political organizations. They also have a searchable database ([http://forms.irs.gov/politicalOrgsSearch/search/basicSearch.jsp](http://forms.irs.gov/politicalOrgsSearch/search/basicSearch.jsp)) of Forms 8871 and 8872 filed with the IRS.
Additional links to note!

- **Tips for Successful Searching of Political Organization Disclosures**
  (http://www.irs.gov/charities/political/article/0,,id=109749,00.html); downloadable version available

- **Explanation on how political organizations are taxed**
  (http://www.irs.gov/charities/political/article/0,,id=96351,00.html)

- **Fact Sheet on Section 527 Political Organizations Tax Filing Requirements**