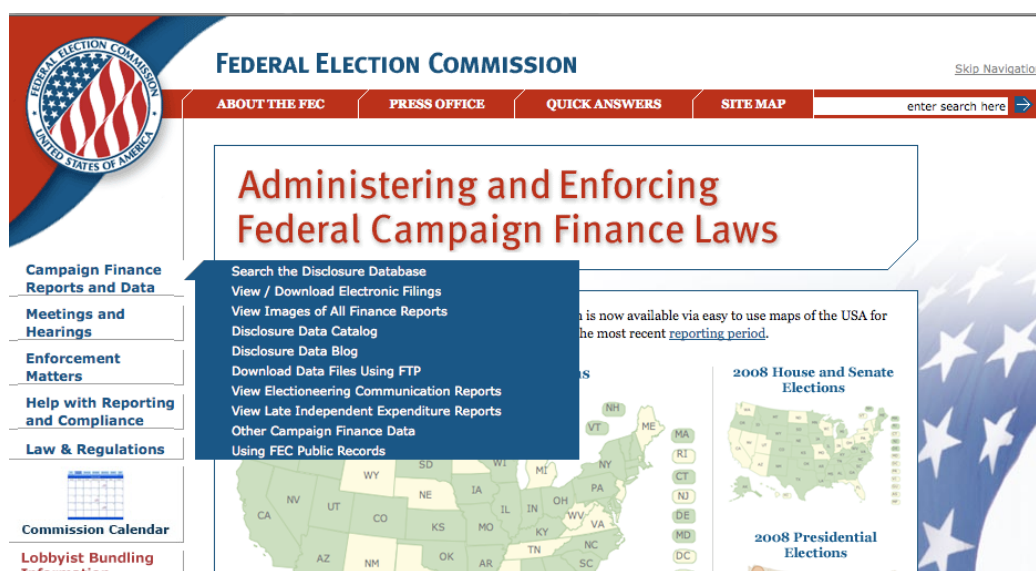


# Guide to Campaign Finance & Political Contributions

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](mailto: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](http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/disclosure_data_search.shtml)), searchable by individual contributors, committee contributors/recipients, and candidate name.



The screenshot shows the Federal Election Commission website. At the top left is the FEC logo. The main header reads "FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION" with a "Skip Navigation" link. Below the header is a navigation menu with "ABOUT THE FEC", "PRESS OFFICE", "QUICK ANSWERS", and "SITE MAP". A search bar is located to the right of the menu. The main content area features a large heading "Administering and Enforcing Federal Campaign Finance Laws". A blue sidebar on the left lists various services: "Campaign Finance Reports and Data", "Meetings and Hearings", "Enforcement Matters", "Help with Reporting and Compliance", "Law & Regulations", "Commission Calendar", and "Lobbyist Bundling Information". A central blue box contains a list of links: "Search the Disclosure Database", "View / Download Electronic Filings", "View Images of All Finance Reports", "Disclosure Data Catalog", "Disclosure Data Blog", "Download Data Files Using FTP", "View Electioneering Communication Reports", "View Late Independent Expenditure Reports", "Other Campaign Finance Data", and "Using FEC Public Records". To the right of this box is a map of the United States with state abbreviations, and below it are links for "2008 House and Senate Elections" and "2008 Presidential Elections".

*Additional links to note!*

- What is a **political action committee** (PAC)? ([http://www.fec.gov/ans/answers\\_pac.shtml#pac](http://www.fec.gov/ans/answers_pac.shtml#pac))
- **PACronyms**, December 2009 (<http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/pacronyms/Pacronyms.pdf>)
- Contribution limits 2009-2010 (<http://www.fec.gov/info/contriblimits0910.pdf>)
- Press Office's **Backgrounders for Reporters** (<http://www.fec.gov/press/bkgnd/bkgnd.shtml>)

- FEC Electronic Filing Report Retrieval ([http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/efile\\_search.shtml](http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/efile_search.shtml))
- FEC Budget documentation (<http://www.fec.gov/pages/budget/budget.shtml>)
- FEC Litigation – ongoing and closed court cases, alphabetical index and summaries (<http://www.fec.gov/law/litigation.shtml>)

## 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.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the National Institute on Money in State Politics. At the top, there's a header with the site's name and a search bar. Below that is a navigation menu. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Find My District' with a search form, 'Special Introduction' with a video player, and 'Jump Into the Data!' which contains several interactive tools and charts like 'My District', 'Wide-angle lens', 'National Overview', 'Industry Influence', 'Timeline', 'Recovery Watch', and 'Top 10,000 Major State & Federal Donors'.

*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](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 (<http://moneyline.cq.com/>)

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.**

The screenshot shows the CQ MoneyLine website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for "PACs & 527s", "CANDIDATES", and "LOBBYING", along with "Log in | Help | Glossary". Below this is a search bar with a dropdown menu for "Individual donor" and a search box containing "Name" and "Contains". To the right of the search bar are buttons for "+", "-", "2009-2010", "GO", and "CLEAR".

The main content area is titled "Campaign finance news" and is updated on Wednesday, July 14, 12:22 p.m. It features three news items:

- BP Oil Spill Keeps Fueling Business on K Street**: The Montana Refining Co. is more than 2,000 miles from the exploded BP well in the Gulf of Mexico and refines oil from Canada. Nevertheless, officials at the Great Falls, Mont., operation, which employs 100 people, fear legislative blowback from the spill. [Roll Call \(paid content\)](#) July 14, 2010 - 12:19 p.m.
- Harris Posts Strong Quarter in Maryland's 1st District**: State Sen. Andy Harris (R) raked in over \$371,000 during from April 1 to June 30, a total that marks his best fundraising quarter of the cycle as he makes his second run at Maryland's 1st district. After spending about \$179,000 during the quarter Harris had about \$897,000 on hand with just over four months to go before the Nov. 2 election. [Full story](#) July 14, 2010 - 12:22 p.m.
- PhRMA Changes Formulary With Castellani**: The drug industry reached for a steady hand Tuesday to run its downtown operation, enlisting veteran K Street executive John Castellani, a Republican.

On the right side of the page, there are several sections:

- Donor fact files**:
  - [Donor Geography](#)
  - [Indian Tribes](#)
- Track MoneyLine Content**:
  - [CQ Politics Money Page](#)
  - [RSS Feed of CQ MoneyLine Blog](#)
- Filing Guidelines**:
  - [Contribution Limits](#)
  - [Filings Calendar](#)
- Data Sources**:
  - [Financial Disclosures for Obama Appointees](#)
  - [Foreign Agents Registration Act Database](#)
  - [House Lobbying Contributions Database](#)

*Additional links to note!*

- MoneyLine user guide ([http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/CQML\\_User\\_Guide\\_Homepage.pdf](http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/CQML_User_Guide_Homepage.pdf))
- **Congressional Research Service (CRS) Reports** related to campaign finance ([http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/crs/crs\\_cam\\_pfin.html](http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/crs/crs_cam_pfin.html))
- **Filings Calendar** (<http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/calendar.html>)
- **Political Party Abbreviations** ([http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/cqml\\_party\\_abbreviations\\_guide.html](http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/cqml_party_abbreviations_guide.html))
- **Presidential Financial Disclosures** (<http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/reference/president/president.html>)
- **Financial Disclosures for Obama Appointees** (<http://moneyline.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/moneyLine/obamafds.html>)

- RSS feed for CQ MoneyLine Blog (<http://moneyline.cq.com/rssfeeds/cqml-topstories.xml>)

## New York City Campaign Finance Board (<http://www.nycffb.info/>)

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.nycffb.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.nycffb.info/press/>)
- Subscribe via email to *Full Disclosure*, CFB's monthly newsletter (<http://www.nycffb.info/contact/newslettermail.aspx>); see also back issues ([http://www.nycffb.info/press/news/full\\_disclosure/index.htm](http://www.nycffb.info/press/news/full_disclosure/index.htm))
- **Campaign Finance Summaries** for citywide elections; receipts and disbursements table per candidate ([http://www.nycffb.info/VSAppls/WebForm\\_Finance\\_Summary.aspx?as\\_election\\_cycle=2009&sm=press &sm=candidates\\_cfs](http://www.nycffb.info/VSAppls/WebForm_Finance_Summary.aspx?as_election_cycle=2009&sm=press &sm=candidates_cfs))

## 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.

The screenshot shows the New York State Board of Elections website. At the top, it says "NEW YORK STATE" and "Board of Elections". Below that is a navigation bar with "HOME", "ABOUT US", "FAQs", "CONTACT US", and "SITE INDEX". A search bar is also present. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Public Information**: Includes links for Voting Information, Help America Vote Act, Campaign Finance, Running for Office, Political Calendar, National Voter Registration, Enrollment Statistics, Election Results, Election Law, County Boards, Voter Education, Elected Officials, and Useful Links.
- Welcome to the New York State Board of Elections**: Announces the Primary Election on September 14, 2010, and the General Election on November 2, 2010.
- Voter Information**: Provides links for Voter Registration Forms, looking up voter registration and polling places, and Absentee Voting.
- Calendar of Events**: A table listing upcoming events:
 

July 15	July Periodic Due	Campaign Finance Filing Calendar (59KB)
August 3 12:00 P.M.	Commissioners Meeting	State Board Offices 40 Steuben Street Albany NY 12207
- Commissioners Meetings**: Details a meeting on Tuesday, August 3, 2010, at 12:00 P.M. at the State Board Offices in Albany, N.Y., with links to minutes and archived webcasts.
- 2010 Elections**: Lists various election results and calendars, including 2010 Petitions Received, 13th SD Special Election Results (22KB), 2010 Official Political Calendar (120KB), and Time off to vote (77KB).
- Legislative Agendas**: Lists the 2010 Proposed Legislative Packet (1.8874KB).
- Campaign Finance News**: Lists 2010 Contribution Limits.

*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/>)
- **PACs** – contributions by and donations to, broken down by sector (<http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/>)
- **Foreign-connected PACs** – PACs formed by American divisions of foreign companies (<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>)
- **Donor Lookup** – find individual and soft money contributors (<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/>)
- Subscribe via email to e-newsletter (<http://www.opensecrets.org/MyOS/>)
- Subscribe via RSS to blog (<http://www.opensecrets.org/news/atom.xml>)

## Tax Information for Political Organizations, IRS

(<http://www.irs.gov/charities/political/>)

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>) of Forms 8871 and 8872 filed with the IRS.

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**IRS Resources**

- [Compliance & Enforcement](#)
- [Contact My Local Office](#)
- [e-file](#)
- [Forms and Publications](#)
- [Newsroom](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Taxpayer Advocate Service](#)
- [Where To File](#)

**Tax Information for Political Organizations**

[FEC Filing Required for Some 527 Organizations](#)  
Overview of FEC "electioneering communications" filings required for some section 527 exempt organizations.

[Filing Requirements](#)  
Political parties; campaign committees for candidates for federal, state or local office; and political action committees are all political organizations subject to tax under IRC section 527 and may have filing requirements with the Service.

[Political Organization Filing and Disclosure](#)  
File and search for notices and reports filed with the Service under IRC section 527.

[Exemption Requirements - Political Organizations](#)  
A brief description of the requirements for exemption under IRC section 527.

[Taxable Income](#)  
A brief explanation of how political organizations are taxed under IRC section 527.

[Solicitation Notice](#)  
A brief description of the solicitation notice requirements under IRC section 6113.

[Employment Taxes for Exempt Organizations](#)  
Links to information about employment taxes for tax-exempt organizations.

[Political Organizations - Resource Materials](#)  
Resources available on irs.gov concerning tax-exempt political organizations (section 527).

*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 ([http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-tege/pofd\\_search\\_tips\\_120108.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-tege/pofd_search_tips_120108.pdf))
- 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 (<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-news/fs-02-13.pdf>)