

TITLE II – ADMINISTRATION

DIVISION 18 CAMPAIGN FINANCE

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CHAPTER 1 APPLICATION AND ADMINISTRATION

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2181-1. Intent and Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to ensure that the financial strength of certain individuals or organizations does not permit them to exercise a disproportionate or controlling influence on the election of Humboldt County candidates. To achieve such purpose, this chapter is designed to reduce the influence of large contributions, to ensure that individuals and interest groups continue to have a fair and equal opportunity to participate in electing county candidates, and to maintain public trust in governmental institutions and the electoral process. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-2. Relation to Political Reform Act of 1974.

This chapter is intended to supplement the Political Reform Act of 1974. Unless a word or term is specifically defined in this chapter, or the contrary is stated or clearly appears from the context, words and terms used herein shall have the same meaning as defined or used in Title 9 of the [California Government Code](#), in which the Political Reform Act of 1974 is codified, and as supplemented by the Regulations of the Fair Political Practices Commission as set forth in Title 2, Division 6 of the [California Code of Regulation](#), as the same may be, from time to time, amended. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-3. Definitions.

(a) “County candidate” means any person who is a candidate for supervisor, assessor, auditor-controller, county clerk-recorder, coroner-public administrator, treasurer-tax collector, district attorney, sheriff, or is an elective county officer whether or not that elective county officer is a candidate for reelection. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

- (b) "County election" means any primary election, general (runoff) election, special election or recall election. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (c) "County office" means the office of county supervisor, assessor, auditor-controller, county clerk-recorder, coroner-public administrator, treasurer-tax collector, district attorney, and sheriff. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (d) "Election cycle" means the applicable period as set forth in Section [2181-3](#) of this chapter. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (e) "Elective county officer" means any person who is a member of the board of supervisors, or is the assessor, auditor-controller, county clerk-recorder, coroner-public administrator, treasurer-tax collector, district attorney, sheriff, whether appointed or elected. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (f) "Indebted former candidate" means a person, other than an elective county officer, who was a candidate for a county office at any county election and who has campaign debt remaining from such election after expiration of the election cycle for the county office for which he or she was a candidate. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (g) "Person" means an individual, proprietorship, firm, partnership, joint venture, syndicate, business trust, company, corporation, limited liability company, association, committee, and any other organization or group of persons acting in concert. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-4. Contribution Limitations.

- (a) *County Candidates.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, no person shall make, and no county candidate or treasurer of any controlled committee of any county candidate shall solicit or accept, any contributions which would cause the total amount contributed by such person to such candidate or to his or her controlled committee, to exceed one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00) during any election cycle for any county office. No contributions shall be accepted by any candidate before the beginning of the election cycle related to the election for which the person is a candidate. Contributions accepted for campaign expenses and for officeholder expenses shall be aggregated for purposes of the limitation set forth in this section. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (b) *Elective County Officers With Outstanding Debt From Prior Election.* No person shall make, and no elective county officer, or treasurer of any controlled committee of any elective county officer, shall solicit or accept, any contributions for the purpose of retiring outstanding debt from a prior county election which would cause the total amount contributed by such person to such elective county officer or to his or her controlled committee, to exceed one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00) for the election in which the outstanding debt was incurred, regardless of when the contribution(s) is made or received. This restriction shall not apply to indebted former candidates who are not elective county officers. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (c) *Recall Elections.* The contribution limitations set forth in Section [2-303\(a\)](#) shall also apply to any committee which collects contributions for the purpose of making expenditures in support of or opposition to the recall of an

elective county officer, and to contributions received by such elective county officer, during a recall election cycle as defined in Section [2181-6](#) of this chapter. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(d) *Candidate's Personal Funds.* The provisions of this section shall not apply to a county candidate's contribution of his or her personal funds to his or her own controlled committee. Contributions by the spouse of a county candidate from such spouse's separate property shall be subject to the contribution limitations set forth in Section [2181-4\(a\)](#). (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(e) *Special Circumstances Permitting Increased Contribution Limits.* In any election cycle where independent expenditures totaling more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) are made to support or oppose any candidate for county office, the one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00) limit imposed by this section shall be increased to five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) for all candidates running for the same seat. In such an instance, no person shall make, and no county candidate, elective county officer or treasurer of any controlled committee of any county candidate or elective county officer shall solicit or accept, any contributions which would cause the total amount contributed by such person to such candidate or to his or her controlled committee, to exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00). (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-5. Outstanding Debt Retirement and Reporting.

(a) Any elective county officer or indebted former candidate, or any controlled committee of any such officer or candidate, accepting any contribution(s) for the purpose of retiring outstanding debt from a prior county election and required by state law to report such contributions on Schedule A of Fair Political Practices Commission Form 460 or any successor form thereto, shall, at the time required for the reporting of such contributions on Schedule A and in addition to any other reporting requirements under state law, clearly designate on said Schedule A which contributions were received for the purpose of retiring outstanding debt and for which prior county election such contributions were received. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(b) Any contribution accepted for the purpose of retiring outstanding debt from a prior county election shall be applied to reduce or retire said outstanding debt in the same reporting period in which such contribution was accepted. The application of any contribution to retire outstanding debt from a prior county election (i.e., repayment of outstanding loans and payment of accrued expenses) shall be itemized and identified on the appropriate schedules and on the Summary Page of Form 460, or any successor form thereto, provided by the Fair Political Practices Commission. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(c) No elective county officer or indebted former candidate, or any controlled committee of any such officer or candidate, shall use any contributions received for the purpose of retiring outstanding debt from a prior county election for any purpose other than for the retirement of outstanding debt remaining from the prior county election for which such contribution was received. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-6. Election Cycles.

(a) *Primary Elections.* For purposes of any primary election for any county office, the term “election cycle” as used in this chapter shall mean the period commencing on the day after a primary election for such county office, and ending on the day of the next primary election for the same county office. In the event there is a runoff election, the primary “election cycle” for the next primary election shall commence on the day after the runoff election and end on the day of the next primary election for the same county office. Notwithstanding the preceding sentences, following a special election for any county office, the “election cycle” for the next primary election for said county office shall commence on the day following said special election and shall end on the day of the next primary election for the same county office. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(b) *General (Runoff) Elections.* For purposes of any runoff election for any county office, the term “election cycle” as used in this chapter shall mean the period commencing on the day after the primary election for such county office and ending on the day of the runoff election. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(c) *Special Elections.* For purposes of any special election for any county office, the term “election cycle” as used in this chapter shall mean the period commencing on the date a special election is called by the board of supervisors and ending on the day of the special election. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(d) *Recall Elections.* For purposes of any recall election of any elective county officer, the term “election cycle” as used in this chapter shall mean the period commencing on either the date a committee is formed pursuant to the Political Reform Act in support of a recall election or the date the county registrar of voters approves a recall petition for circulation and gathering of signatures, whichever occurs earlier, and ending on the day the first of the following events occur:

- (1) The time provided by law for the gathering of signatures on recall petitions expires without sufficient recall petition signatures having been filed with the county registrar of voters to require a recall election; (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (2) All committees formed in support of the recall have been terminated pursuant to the provisions of the Political Reform Act; (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (3) The date the recall election is held. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-7. Aggregation of Contributions.

For purposes of the contribution limitations contained in this chapter, the following provisions shall apply: (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(a) All contributions made by a sponsored committee to a county candidate or to an elective county officer (or to a committee controlled by such candidate or officer) shall be combined with those contributions made during the same election cycle by the sponsor(s) of the committee. Consistent with the definition and use of the terms

“sponsored committee” and “sponsor” in the Political Reform Act, the term “sponsor” shall not include individuals. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(b) Contributions received from the following combinations of individuals and entities must be aggregated to determine the cumulative amount of contributions received from a contributor: (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(1) Contributions from an individual who makes contributions from personal funds and who also has sole authority to direct and control contributions made from other funds; (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(2) Contributions from business entities in a parent-subsidary relationship and business entities with the same controlling owner (more than fifty percent (50%)), unless the entities act completely independently in their decisions to make contributions; (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(3) Contributions from any number of entities or committees if the same person or a majority of the same persons in fact directs and controls the contributions each entity makes. This subdivision shall not apply to treasurers of committees if these treasurers do not participate in or control in any way a decision on whether the candidate or candidates received contributions. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(c) Contributions by a married person shall be treated as the separate contributions of such person and shall not be aggregated with any contributions of the spouse of such person. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(d) Contributions by children under eighteen (18) years of age shall be treated as contributions by their parent(s) or legal guardian(s), one-half to each parent or guardian unless only one (1) parent or guardian has legal custody of such child in which event any such contributions shall be attributed solely to the custodial parent. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-8. Multiple Campaign Committees.

(a) A county candidate shall have no more than one (1) controlled committee for each county office for which such individual is a candidate or is an elective county officer and such controlled committee shall have only one (1) bank account out of which all qualified campaign and officeholder expenses related to that county office shall be made. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(b) This section does not prevent a county candidate or an elective county officer from establishing another controlled committee solely for the purpose of running for a state, federal, city or other elective county office, or for opposing his or her recall. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-9. Loans to County Candidates and Their Controlled Committees.

(a) A loan shall be considered a contribution from the maker and the guarantor of the loan and shall be subject to the contribution limitations of this chapter. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(b) The proceeds of a loan made to a county candidate by a commercial lending institution in the regular course of business on the same terms available to members of the public shall not be subject to the contribution limitations of this chapter if the loan is made directly to the candidate. The guarantors of such a loan shall remain subject to the contribution limits of this chapter. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(c) Extensions of credit (other than loans pursuant to Section 2-308(b)) for a period of more than thirty (30) days are subject to the contribution limitations of this chapter. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(d) This section shall apply only to loans and extensions of credit used or intended for use for campaign purposes or which are otherwise connected with the holding of public office. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-10. Funds, Property, Goods or Services Received by Officials Treated as Contributions.

Any funds, property, goods or services, other than government funds, received by elective county officers which are used, or intended by the donor or by the recipient to be used, for expenses (including legal expenses) related to holding public office, shall be considered campaign contributions and shall be subject to the contribution limitation of Section [2181-4](#). Reimbursement for travel expenses related to holding public office shall be excluded from the provisions of this section. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-11. Disclosure Requirements.

(a) *Disclosure of name, address, and occupation and employer of contributor.* If either the name, address, occupation and employer of an individual contributor (or if such individual is self-employed, the name of the business, if any, under which the individual is operating) is not on file in the records of the recipient of the contribution by the end of the reporting period in which the contribution was accepted, the contribution shall then be returned to the individual, or to the county's general fund, by the end of that reporting period. Notwithstanding the above, if a contribution does not designate the requisite information, the candidate or the candidate's committee may hold the contribution without returning it or depositing it into a campaign account for a period of up to fourteen (14) days while the requisite information is obtained. The required information shall be reported on Schedule A of Form 460, or any successor form thereto, as prepared by the Fair Political Practices Commission. Both the receipt and return of any such contribution shall be disclosed on the appropriate schedules of Form 460, or any successor form thereto, as prepared by the Fair Political Practices Commission. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(b) *Disclosure of Major Contributors.* Any mailing financially supported by an independent expenditure committee shall indicate on the envelope containing the mailing, and on the mailing itself, the name of the committee, and the names of the top three financial contributors to the committee at the time the mailing is being prepared. This required disclosure shall be in substantially the following form: "This information is provided by [Name of Independent Expenditure Committee] and has been supported by [names of top three contributors]." (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-12. Reporting of Cumulative Contributions.

Contributions received from any contributor during a reporting period which have a cumulative total of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or more when added to all other contributions received from such contributor during the same election cycle shall be itemized and reported, both as to individual contribution amounts received during the reporting period and the total cumulative amount received during the election cycle. Such amounts shall be reported on Schedule A of Form 460 or any successor form thereto, as prepared by the Fair Political Practices Commission, if the candidate or controlled committee is required to use such form, or shall be reported on a separate schedule appended to the required campaign statement. The term election cycle as used in this section shall mean the period described in Section [2181-6](#). (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-13. Notice of Independent Expenditures.

Any person who makes independent expenditures in support of or in opposition to any county candidate, which accumulate to one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) or more during an election cycle shall notify the county registrar of voters and all candidates running for the same seat, by telegram, facsimile, or by any other electronic means accepted by the county registrar of voters, within twenty-four (24) hours each time such an expenditure is made. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-14. Enforcement of Chapter.

(a) *No Criminal Penalties.* Notwithstanding any other provision of the Humboldt County Code, any violation of any provision of this chapter shall be enforceable solely as provided in this section. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(b) *Civil Liability.* Any person who knowingly and willfully violates or otherwise fails to comply with any provision or requirement of this chapter shall be liable to the county of Humboldt in a sum not to exceed the following amount for each such violation: (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(1) For the making or accepting of any contribution in excess of the applicable contribution limits specified in this chapter, a sum equal to three (3) times the amount by which the contribution exceeds the applicable contribution limit, or the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00), whichever is greater, for each violation. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(2) For any other violation of this chapter, the sum of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for each violation. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

(c) *Right to Cure Unknowing Violation.* In the event a candidate accepts a contribution and then becomes aware it is in violation of the contribution limit, that violation by the candidate may be excused, and will not be deemed "knowing and willful," if the candidate returns the contribution or contributes it to the county general fund within fourteen (14) days of becoming aware of the violation. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

- (d) *Debt Owning to County.* Any amount due from any person pursuant to subsection [\(b\)](#) of this section shall be a debt due and owing upon demand to the general fund of the county of Humboldt. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (e) *Civil Action to Collect Debt and Obtain Other Relief.* The district attorney of the county of Humboldt may file and prosecute a civil action in superior court, to recover any amount(s) due and owing to the county of Humboldt by any person pursuant to this section, or to enjoin any violation or otherwise compel compliance with the requirements of this chapter. In the event an allegation of violation of this chapter involves a candidate for district attorney, the matter shall be referred to the California Attorney General for investigation and enforcement. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (f) *Limitation of Actions.* No civil action shall be brought under the provisions of this section unless said action is filed within two (2) years following the date of such violation. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)
- (g) *Remedial Measures.* If the district attorney determines or believes that any person (the target party) has violated any provision of this chapter, the district attorney may, at his or her sole discretion, advise the target party of remedial measures which may be taken by the target party to avoid possible civil action (the “remedial measures”). Such remedial measures may, but need not necessarily, include the payment of a civil fine to the county. Nothing contained herein shall be deemed to require the district attorney to offer remedial measures to any target party. In the event the target party is offered and timely performs such remedial measures to the satisfaction of the district attorney, the district attorney shall advise the target party (and any person who, in writing, informed or complained to the district attorney concerning any such violation), in writing, that the alleged violation has been resolved (the letter of resolution) and, in such event, no civil action shall thereafter be filed or maintained relating to such alleged violation of this chapter. (Ord. 2520, § 1, 10/14/2014)

2181-15. Electronic Filing – Findings and Purpose.

- (a) The Board finds that public access to campaign disclosure information is a vital and integral component of a fully informed electorate. Transparency in campaign financing is critical in order to maintain public trust and support of the political process.
- (b) State law requires candidates, persons supporting or opposing ballot measures and certain other types of political committees to file campaign finance statements with the Registrar of Voters detailing the sources of contributions and manner of expenditure of contributions. Government Code Section [84615](#) authorizes local jurisdictions to require the filing of campaign statements and reports solely in an electronic form, with a specified exemption. The purpose of these laws is to assist voters in making informed electoral decisions and to assist in ensuring compliance with campaign contributions laws. In any instance in which the original statement, report, or other document is required to be filed with the Secretary of State and a copy of that statement, report, or other documents is required to be filed with the local government agency, the filer is exempt from filing the statement electronically as provided by Government Code Section [84615](#).
- (c) Frequently, these disclosure reports are lengthy. Moreover, hundreds of such reports may be filed with the Registrar of Voters office each reporting period. It is difficult for members of the public, the media and election officials efficiently to review and compare these statements.

(d) The Board makes the following findings in support of requiring that political committees and candidates that meet certain financial thresholds file their campaign statements electronically:

- (1) An electronic system reduces paper waste and time spent processing and storing paper filings, so that efforts can be focused on helping filers comply with filing requirements.
- (2) An electronic system is not unduly burdensome on candidates in that it reduces the need for candidates to print out and physically mail statements to the Registrar of Voters office, and it eases the entry of contributors' information for that the system recognizes repeat contributors and automatically populates their information.
- (3) The system used by the County contains multiple safeguards to protect the integrity and security of the data and is operated securely and effectively.
- (4) An electronic system streamlines the filing process by storing information previously entered, calculating numbers, and helping catch errors before filings are submitted.
- (5) Once disclosures are placed online, they are easily accessible for public viewing and allow the public to search reports by field, including, but not limited to, election, candidate, date, contributor and expenditure. (Ord. 2680, § 1, 8/10/2021)

2181-16. Filing Campaign Statements.

(a) Whenever any elected officer, candidate or political committee is required by the California Political Reform Act to file a semi-annual campaign statement, a pre-election campaign statement, an amended campaign statement, a supplemental pre-election campaign statement, a report disclosing a contribution received by or made to a candidate, local ballot measure, or an independent expenditure made for or against a candidate or local ballot measure as defined by Government Code Section [84615](#), and any further amendments to it, or more, during an election cycle with the Registrar of Voters, it shall be filed electronically beginning January 1, 2022, and may be filed electronically beginning on the effective date of the ordinance codified in this section until that date. The elected officer, candidate or committee shall file the statement using the electronic filing system available on the Registrar of Voters' website. The street or address or building number of the persons or entity representatives, or any bank account number, shall be redacted and not be displayed online.

(b) Statements or reports that are filed electronically with the Registrar of Voters pursuant to this section need not also be filed in a paper format.

(c) This requirement does not apply to any candidate who receives contributions or makes expenditures in a calendar year totaling less than the amount defined by Government Code Section [84615](#), and any further amendments to it.

(d) In any instance in which the original statement, report, or other document is required to be filed with the Secretary of State and a copy of that statement, report, or other document is required to be filed with the local government agency, the filer is exempt from filing the statement electronically as provided by Government Code

Section [84615](#). However, the filer has the option of filing an electronic copy with the Registrar of Voters. (Ord. 2680, § 2, 8/10/2021)

2181-17. Filing Statements of Economic Interest.

(a) Any person holding a position listed in Government Code Section [87200](#), or designated in the County of Humboldt's Conflict of Interest Code adopted pursuant to Government Code Section [87300](#), shall file any required Statement of Economic Interest reports (Form 700) with the appropriate filing officer for the County of Humboldt using the electronic filing system as set forth in Section [2181-16](#) and pursuant to Government Code Section [87500](#) et seq.

(b) Persons filing a Form 700 electronically with the filing officer for the County of Humboldt are not required to also file in paper format. An electronic filing will be the official record of such filing. Filers must sign electronic filings in the electronic filing system under penalty of perjury. (Ord. 2680, § 3, 8/10/2021)

2181-18. Severability.

If any provision of this chapter or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications, and to this end the provisions of this chapter are declared to be severable. (Ord. 2680, § 4, 8/10/2021)

The Humboldt County Code is current through Ordinance 2751, and legislation passed through December 3, 2024.

Disclaimer: The Office of the County Counsel has the official version of the Humboldt County Code. Users should contact the Clerk of the Board's office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

[County Website: humboldt.gov](http://humboldt.gov)

[County Telephone: \(707\) 445-7236](tel:(707)445-7236)

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