

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code - Campaign Finance and Conflict of Interest]

Ordinance amending the Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code to 1) prohibit earmarking of contributions and false identification of contributors; 2) modify contributor card requirements; 3) require disclosure of contributions solicited by City elective officers for ballot measure and independent expenditure committees; 4) require additional disclosures for campaign contributions from business entities to political committees; 5) require disclosure of bundled campaign contributions; 6) extend the prohibition on campaign contributions to candidates for City elective offices and City elective officers who must approve certain City contracts; 7) prohibit campaign contributions to members of the Board of Supervisors, candidates for the Board, the Mayor, candidates for Mayor, City Attorney, candidates for City Attorney, and their controlled committees, from any person with pending or recently resolved land use matters; 8) require committees to file a third pre-election statement prior to an election; 9) remove the prohibition against distribution of campaign advertisements containing false endorsements; 10) allow members of the public to receive a portion of penalties collected in certain enforcement actions; 11) permit the Ethics Commission to recommend contract debarment as a penalty for campaign finance violations; 12) create new conflict of interest and political activity rules for elected officials and members of boards and commissions; 13) specify recusal procedures for members of boards and commissions; and 14) establish local behested payment reporting requirements for donors and City officers.

Existing Law

1. Campaign contributions: general requirements

State law prohibits “earmarking” campaign contributions - making any contribution to a committee with the understanding that it will be further contributed to another identified candidate committee. Cal. Gov. Code § 85704. State law also requires campaign committees to accurately report campaign contributions. See Cal. Gov. Code § 84211.

Neither state nor local law require prospective contributors to make affirmative statements regarding the legality of their campaign contributions.

2. Campaign contributions: disclosure requirements

Neither state nor local law require (a) with respect to contributions made to ballot measure and independent expenditure committees, the disclosure of whether a City elected official solicited those contributions, or (b) the disclosure of bundled campaign contributions.

State law requires campaign committees to itemize each campaign contribution of \$100 or more, and for each such contribution, the contributor's name, address, occupation, and employer. Cal. Gov. Code § 84211(f).

3. Campaign contributions: prohibitions

Local law prohibits prospective City contractors, seeking certain contracts worth \$50,000 or more, from making campaign contributions to City elective officers who must approve those contracts, from the commencement of negotiations for such contract until either (a) the termination of negotiations for such contract, or (b) six months have elapsed from the date the contract is approved. S.F. Campaign & Gov'tal Conduct Code § 1.126.

Neither state nor local law impose any similar prohibition on campaign contributions from entities seeking City approval for land use-related matters.

4. Campaign statements: pre-election reporting requirements

Certain campaign committees must file two pre-election campaign statements prior to local elections. The first pre-election statement must be filed no later than 40 days before to each election, and must report the committee's fundraising activity and expenditures for the period ending 45 days before the election. The second pre-election statement must be filed no later than 12 days before each election, and must report on the committee's financial activity for the period ending 17 days before the election. S.F. Campaign & Gov'tal Conduct Code § 1.135.

5. False endorsement ordinance

Local law seeks to prohibit the creation and distribution of campaign advertisements that contain false endorsements. Under this provision, a false endorsement is defined as "a statement, signature, photograph, or image representing that a person expressly endorses or conveys support for or opposition to a candidate or measure when in fact the person does not" take such a position. S.F. Campaign & Gov'tal Conduct Code § 1.163.5.

6. Campaign finance: private right of action and debarment

Local law authorizes any "voter" to file a civil action to enjoin violations of or compel compliance with the City's campaign finance laws. S.F. Campaign & Gov'tal Conduct Code § 1.168(b). Prior to initiating such action, the voter is required to notify the City Attorney's Office. If the voter prevails in litigation, the court may award reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

Local law does not explicitly provide for the administrative debarment of a contractor for violation of local campaign finance laws. See S.F. Admin. Code, Ch. 28.

7. Conflict of interest laws for elected officials and members of City boards and commissions

City elected officials and members of City boards and commissions are subject to a range of state and local conflict of interest laws, including the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov. Code Section 87100, et seq.), California Government Code Section 1090, and the provisions of the City's Government Ethics Ordinance.

8. Political activity laws for elected officials and members of City boards and commissions

Under state and local law, City elected officials and members of City boards and commissions are restricted from engaging in certain political activities, when such activities would consume City resources. See Cal. Gov. Code § 8314; Cal. Pen. Code § 424; S.F. Campaign & Gov'tal Conduct Code § 3.218(c). State and local law additionally prohibit City officials from accepting bribes. See Cal. Pen. Code § 68; S.F. Campaign & Gov'tal Conduct Code § 3.216(a).

Local law also specifically prohibits City officers from soliciting campaign contributions from other City officers and employees, participating in political activities while in uniform, and engaging in political activities during working hours or on City premises. S.F. Campaign & Gov'tal Conduct Code § 3.230.

9. Behested payment reporting

State law requires elected officials – but not members of the City boards and commissions – to file “behested payment” reports when they solicit contributions of \$5,000 from a single source in a calendar year for legislative, governmental, or charitable purposes. Such reports must be filed with the Ethics Commission.

A recently enacted local law (Ord. No. 01-17) would require members of certain City boards and commissions to file behested payment reports for some charitable contributions totaling \$1,000 or more. This ordinance would become operative on January 1, 2018.

Amendments to Current Law

1. Campaign contributions: general requirements

The proposed ordinance would clarify that no person may make a campaign contribution to a committee with the understanding that it will be subsequently contributed to another candidate or committee in order to circumvent local campaign contribution limits. See Proposed Section 1.114(c). The proposed ordinance would also explicitly prohibit “assumed name contributions” – that is, campaign contributions made using the name of a person other than the contributor's own name. See Proposed Section 1.114.5(c).

The proposal would also require each contributor, who has contributed \$100 or more to a campaign committee, to provide a “signed attestation” that the campaign contribution does not violate certain local campaign finance laws. See Proposed Section 1.114.5(a).

2. Campaign contributions: disclosure requirements

Proposed Section 1.114.5(b) would require any person making contributions that total \$5,000 or more a single calendar year to a ballot measure or independent expenditure committee, at the behest of a City elected official, to disclose the name of that elected official.

In addition to existing state law requirements, Proposed Section 1.124 would require campaign committees to disclose additional information regarding contributions from business entities that contribute \$10,000 or more in a single election cycle. For such contributions, committees would be required to disclose the names of the entities’ principal officers and whether they have received funds through a City contract or grant within the last 24 months.

Proposed Section 1.125 would require committees controlled by a City elected official or a candidate for such office that disclose certain information regarding “bundlers” who have delivered or transmitted contributions totaling \$5,000 or more to those officials and candidates.

3. Campaign contributions: prohibitions

The proposed ordinance would expand the scope of contracts subject to Section 1.126’s ban on campaign contributions to include development agreements. The proposal would increase the threshold for the value of contracts that trigger this prohibition from \$50,000 to \$100,000, and would expand the length of the prohibition from six months to 12 months. The proposal would also add notification requirements regarding this campaign contribution ban.

Proposed Section 1.127 would establish a new campaign contribution ban with respect to persons with land use matters before City decision-making bodies. A “land use matter” would be defined as (a) any request to a City elective officer for a Planning Code or Zoning Map amendment, or (b) any application for an entitlement that requires a discretionary determination at a public hearing before a board or commission under the San Francisco Building Code, the Planning Code, or the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.). But “land use matter” would not include discretionary review hearings before the Planning Commission. Persons with a financial interest in such land use matters would be prohibited from making campaign contributions to a member of the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor, the City Attorney, their controlled committees, or candidates for such offices from the time of a request or application regarding a land use matter until 12 months after a City board or commission has rendered a final decision.

4. Campaign statements: pre-election reporting requirements

The proposed ordinance would require certain committees to file a third pre-election statement prior to local elections. The third pre-election statement must be filed no later than four days before each election, and must report on the committee's financial activity for the period ending six days before the election.

5. False endorsement ordinance

The proposal would delete the City's false endorsement ordinance in its entirety.

6. Campaign finance: private right of action and debarment

The proposed ordinance would authorize any "resident" – instead of any "voter" – to file a civil action to enjoin violations of or compel compliance with the City's campaign finance laws. The proposal would also explicitly authorize the Ethics Commission to, after a hearing on the merits or settlement of an enforcement action, to recommend the debarment of a contractor from future City contracting opportunities.

7. Conflict of interest laws for elected officials and members of City boards and commissions

In addition to existing state and local conflict of interest laws, the Proposed Section 3.207 would prohibit City elected officials and members of City boards or commissions from:

- using their public position or office to seek or obtain anything of value for the private or professional benefit of themselves, their immediate families, or organizations with which they are associated;
- directly or indirectly, giving, offering, promising to give, withholding, or offering or promising to withhold their votes or influence on any proposed or pending matter in exchange for campaign contributions; and
- soliciting or accepting, directly or indirectly, anything of value if it could reasonably be expected to influence the officer's vote, actions, or judgment, or could reasonably be considered a reward for any official action or inaction on the part of the officer.

8. Political activity laws for elected officials and members of City boards and commissions

In addition to existing state and local political activity laws, the Proposed Section 3.231 would prohibit:

- City elected officials and members of City boards or commissions from soliciting uncompensated volunteer services from any subordinate employee for political campaigns; and

- members of City boards or commissions from soliciting campaign contributions for the benefit of their appointing authorities.

9. Behested payment reporting

The proposed ordinance would supplant and expand Ordinance No. 01-17. It would require City elected officials and members of City boards and commissions to file behested payment reports with respect to certain charitable contributions of \$1,000 or more. It would also require the donors and recipients of such contributions to file additional disclosures in specified circumstances.

Background Information

The Board of Supervisors may enact amendments to the City's Campaign Finance Reform Ordinance and Government Ethics Ordinances (Article I, Chapter 1 and Article III, Chapter 2 of the San Francisco Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code) if:

- (a) the amendments further the purposes of these Chapters;
- (b) the Ethics Commission approves the proposed amendments in advance by at least a four-fifths vote of all its members;
- (c) the proposed amendments are available for public review at least 30 days before the amendment is considered by the Board of Supervisors or any committee of the Board of Supervisors; and
- (d) the Board of Supervisors approves the proposed amendments by at least a two-thirds vote of all its members.

The Ethics Commission approved the proposed amendments on at its November 27, 2017 meeting by a 4-1 vote.

San Francisco Charter Section 15.102 also authorizes the Ethics Commission to submit these amendments directly to the voters as a ballot measure, if the Ethics Commission chooses to do so by a four-fifths vote.

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