



Important Law Changes Applicable to Party Committees

Public Acts 13-180 and 13-191

Becoming a Candidate [Public Act 13-180, section 1]

Under prior law, an individual becomes a candidate (and must therefore register within ten days) when the individual has (A) been endorsed by a party or become eligible for a position on the ballot at an election or primary, or (B) solicited or received contributions, made expenditures or given consent to any other person to solicit or receive contributions or make expenditures with the intent to bring about the individual's nomination or election. Public Act 13-180 (the "Act") clarifies that individuals may solicit or receive contributions on behalf of a party committee without triggering the need to register as a candidate. An individual may also give consent to a party committee for that party committee to (1) make expenditures with the intent to bring about the individual's nomination for election or election to office, or (2) solicit or receive contributions for the party committee that the party committee intends to use to support that individual's nomination for election or election to office, and neither triggers the need to register as a candidate.

Requirements to be a Treasurer [Public Act 13-180, section 25]

The Act sets some additional restrictions on who may serve as treasurer or deputy treasurer of a party committee. First, in order to serve in such a capacity, the person must have paid any civil penalties or forfeitures assessed against him under the campaign finance statutes. In addition, if the person has been convicted of or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to any felony involving fraud, forgery, larceny, embezzlement or bribery, or any criminal offense under the state election or campaign finance laws, the Act will not permit such person to serve as a treasurer or deputy treasurer unless at least eight years have elapsed from the date of the conviction or plea or the completion of any sentence, whichever date is later, without a subsequent conviction of or plea to another such felony or offense.

Deposit Rule [Public Act 13-180, section 5]

The Act provides that treasurers must deposit contributions into the committee's designated depository not later than **twenty days** after receiving them. Under prior law, they only had fourteen days to deposit contributions.

Contribution Limits [Public Act 13-180, section 7]

The Act increases the amount an individual may contribute per year from \$1,000 to **\$2,000** with respect to town committees and from \$5,000 to **\$10,000** with respect to state central committees.

Changes to Certain Contribution Exemptions

1) Ad Purchases [Public Act 13-180, section 2]

Only town committees could make use of the exemption for the purchase of advertising space in a program or on signs at a fundraising event if the purchase price for the ad space did not exceed certain limits. The Act permits state central committees to utilize this exemption as well. The same limits apply.

2) House Party Exemption [Public Act 13-180, section 2]

Under prior law, in order to make use of the house party exemption, the host(s) had to pay for the entire cost of the event – for all of the invitations, food and beverages. While the host(s) must still generally pay for all costs associated with the event in order to make use of the house party exemption, a candidate or committee may now pay for a portion or all of the costs of the invitation for the event. In such a case, the amount paid by the candidate or committee is not counted toward the calculation of the cumulative value of the party provided by the host(s), for purposes of determining whether the event falls within the house party exemption.

3) *De Minimis* Activity [Public Act 13-180, section 2]

The Act clarifies that included in the definition of *de minimis* activity is the creation of digital photos or video as part of an electronic file. This means, for example, that a volunteer could provide the party committee with a disc of digital photos to be used for committee purposes and this would not need to be counted as an in-kind contribution from that individual.

4) Use of Offices and Equipment Provided by a Party Committee [Public Act 13-180, section 2]

Under the prior law, a party committee could provide offices, telephones, computers, and similar equipment that serves as its headquarters or otherwise uses to a candidate as an organization expenditure. Under the Act, this provision of offices and equipment is no longer an organization expenditure but is instead a permissible donation from a party committee to a candidate through the contribution and expenditure exemptions. Practically speaking, this means that when a party committee allows a candidate or candidates to use the party committee's office space and equipment, it no longer has to allocate the cost of the expense and report that allocation among each candidate using them. Rather, the related costs are merely reported as expenses of the party committee. Recipient candidates have no reporting obligations if a party committee is sharing use of its office space and equipment under this exception.

Lawful Purposes of a Party Committee [Public Act 13-180, sections 1 & 6]

All spending by a party committee must be for the committee's lawful purpose. Under the old law, the lawful purpose of a party committee was promoting the party, the candidates of the party, and continuing operating costs of the party. The Act has added party building activities to this list. The Act defines "party building activities" to include, but not be limited to, "any political meeting, conference, convention, and other event, attendance or involvement at which promotes or advances the interests of a party at a local, state or national level, and any associated expenses, including

travel, lodging, and any admission or fees or other costs, whether or not any such meeting, conference, convention, or other event is sponsored by the party.”

Organization Expenditures [Public Act 13-180, section 1]

Several changes have been made to what a party committee may provide to a candidate or candidate committee as an organization expenditure. An organization expenditure is a certain type of in-kind donation that is not considered an expenditure or contribution and therefore does not count toward the party committee’s contribution limit to the candidate, but it remains reportable.

Under prior law, communications in the form of **party candidate listings** were limited to certain specified categories of content about the candidate being supported in order to qualify as an organization expenditure (rather than a contribution). The Act now permits a party candidate listing to promote the success **or defeat** of any candidate or slate of candidates, as well as the success or defeat of any referendum question or political party, as long as the communication is not a solicitation for or on behalf of a candidate committee.

The Act also permits a party committee to provide candidates and candidate committees, as an organization expenditure, with an electronic page for **merchant account services** to collect online contributions.

Disclaimer Requirements for Written Communications [Public Act 13-180, section 9]

For communications in the form of a flyer or leaflet, newspaper, magazine, or similar literature, or that is delivered by mail, the disclaimer required to be on the face of communication must now be at least in **eight-point type of uniform font**.

Also, where a party committee pays for any print, television or social media communication promoting a slate of candidates, it is no longer required to include the words “approved by” together with the names of the candidates on the slate. Rather, it need only include the “paid for by” language followed by the name of the party committee.

Contributions from a Joint Checking Account [Public Act 13-191, section 1]

Under the prior law, contributions written from a joint checking account were considered to be from the signer of the check, or if signed by more than one of the account holders, divided equally between them. If the account holders did not wish the check to be divided equally, they could submit a signed statement (e.g. a certification card), with the check signed by both of them, indicating how the contribution should be allocated differently. With the passage of Public Act 13-191, joint checking account holders are now permitted to submit such signed statements and have the check allocated in accordance with those statements even if only one of them has actually signed the accompanying check.

Filing Requirements [Public Act 13-180, section 14]

The Act has changed the filing requirements of state central committees. Other than with respect to regular state or municipal elections, where they must file regardless of activity, state central committees are now only required to file the twelfth day before (and covering up through nineteen days before) any other election or any primary or referendum when they made or received a contribution or expenditure in connection with such election, primary, or referendum. Under the old law, they were required to file in connection with all elections, such as special elections, even when they did not make or receive a contribution or expenditure in connection with it. Moreover, they were not required to file in connection with a primary or referendum, even if they had spent or received in connection with it.

Civil Penalties [Public Act 13-180, sections 10]

Under prior law, a person who is found to have knowingly and willfully violated any provisions of the campaign finance statutes could be fined up to \$5,000 or imprisoned up to five years or both. The Act now permits a civil penalty of up to **\$25,000**, unless a fine of a larger amount is otherwise provided for as a maximum fine in the statutes, in which case the larger amount is the maximum fine for the violation. The Act also removed the potential for imprisonment as a penalty.

For a more detailed summary of Public Act 13-180, please see the Office of Legislative Research's [Bill Analysis](#) available on the Connecticut General Assembly website.