

Campaign Fundraising

This Guideline is provided as an information resource only. For authoritative advice, contact the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board.

Times during which fundraising is permitted. State statutes do not limit the time period during which campaign fundraising may occur, once the individual has registered a campaign committee with the Board. Rules or policies of the Assembly or Senate may limit the time during which fundraising activities are permitted for an incumbent of either house; consult the Chief Clerk of each house for specific restrictions.

Soliciting a lobbyist or lobbying principal.

For a personal contribution. State statutes limit when a member of, or candidate for, the Legislature may solicit a personal contribution from a lobbyist. A legislator or candidate for the Legislature may solicit a lobbyist for a personal contribution **only between the date when candidates can begin to circulate nomination papers (April 15 for the general election) and the date of the election in the year of the candidate's election.** This solicitation "window" does not open for a legislative candidate until after the Legislature concludes its final floor period (as determined by joint resolution of the Legislature). The "window" for a legislative candidate closes during any time that the Legislature is in a special or extraordinary session.

The restriction on soliciting applies whether a legislator or legislative candidate is soliciting a personal contribution for the candidate's own campaign committee or for another candidate. The restriction also applies to soliciting through an agent.

For a Political Action Committee (PAC), conduit, or other non-personal contribution. There is no limitation on when a candidate or state official may solicit a lobbyist or lobbying principal for a contribution to a PAC, conduit, political party, legislative campaign committee or other political registrant that is not the lobbyist's personal contribution.

Accepting a contribution from a lobbyist or principal. A legislator or legislative candidate may accept a contribution from a lobbyist or lobbying principal only during the time period permitted for soliciting a lobbyist or principal for that contribution. This restriction applies to both monetary and in-kind contributions.

Political Action Committee (PAC) limitations. The restrictions under the lobbying law apply only to a lobbying principal itself – not to a PAC, even if it is a principal's PAC. A legislator or legislative candidate may accept a PAC contribution at any time, except as otherwise restricted by a rule or policy of the Legislature. A legislator or legislative candidate may solicit a PAC at any time.

Types of persons from whom a legislator or legislative candidate may accept a contribution. A legislator or legislative candidate may accept a contribution from any individual (either directly or through a conduit), a political party, or a political action committee (PAC). A legislator or legislative candidate may not accept a contribution from any corporation or limited liability company but may accept a contribution from such an organization's PAC.

What is a solicitation? A solicitation can be oral, written, or electronic. We recommend that a solicitation sent to a lobbyist outside the “window” should contain a disclaimer that it is not a solicitation for a personal contribution from the lobbyist.

Limitations on how much a legislator or legislative candidate may accept. A member of, or candidate for, the Assembly may accept up to \$500 from a single individual during any two-year period beginning January 1st of the year following the previous election. A member of, or candidate for, the Senate may accept up to \$1,000 from a single individual during any four-year period beginning January 1st of the year following the previous election. The maximum aggregate contribution from a single PAC or other candidate committee is also \$500 for Assembly candidates and \$1,000 for Senate candidates.

The aggregate that may be accepted from all PACs combined may not exceed \$7,763 for an Assembly candidate or \$15,525 for a Senate candidate. The maximum from all committees, including candidate committees and political parties, may not exceed \$11,213 for an Assembly candidate or \$22,425 for a Senate candidate. There is no limit on how much an individual may contribute to his or her own campaign committee.

Exceptions to these contribution limits or time periods may apply when a candidate is subject to a recount or recall election, or runs for election to a statewide or local office.

Legal references: §§11.26, 11.38, and 13.625, *Wisconsin Statutes*; *Plumbers and Gas Fitters Local 75 Political Action fund, et al. v. State of Wisconsin Ethics Board*, Dane County Circuit Court, 93-CV-3984 (February 23, 1994), *aff'd*, District IV Court of Appeals, 94-0826 (May 19, 1995), *rev. den.*, Supreme Court, 94-0826 (September 27, 1995).