ETHICS BULLETIN: CONTRIBUTION RULES

TO:	Candidates and Campaign Treasurers
FROM:	Public Ethics Commission
DATE:	August 21, 2026

Candidates and their committees have a responsibility to ensure that they do not accept prohibited contributions. This communication is intended to ensure that you are aware of the rules and avoid violations that can result in forfeitures of funds by the committees involved.

Prohibition on Contractor Contributions

Whenever a contract requires City Council or Oakland School Board approval, contractors are ***prohibited from making any contribution*** to any committee controlled by a City officeholder or candidate between the start of negotiations and for 180 days after the completion or termination of negotiations regarding the contract.

For entities such as organizations or businesses, the restriction includes persons with positions such as board chair, president, CEO or executive director, as well as anyone authorized to represent the entity before the City or School Board regarding the contract, including a paid lobbyist. Carefully review all contributions to determine whether the donor is bidding or negotiating for a City or School Board contract.

Required Notice on Fundraising Materials and Mediums

Candidates for local office must include the following notice on all campaign fundraising materials, including print communications, emails, and websites:

> **The Oakland Campaign Reform Act limits campaign contributions by all persons [OMC §3.12.050 and §3.12.060] and prohibits contributions during specified time periods from contractors doing business with the City of Oakland or the Oakland Unified School District [OMC §3.12.140].**

The notice must be the equivalent of eight-point roman boldface type, contained in a box set apart from the rest of the text, and in a color/print that contrasts with the background, so it is easily legible.

Contribution Limits Apply Per Election Cycle

Remember that contribution limits are per election cycle and do not reset annually. If your 2026 campaign committee received contributions in 2025 and 2026 from the same individual or committee, the cumulative amount must not exceed the contribution limit. Track total contributions by donor for the entire election cycle to ensure that you don't deposit contributions over the contribution limit.

Aggregation Rules

The Oakland Campaign Reform Act defines when contributions from two or more entities are aggregated and attributed to one entity or individual for purposes of contribution limits.

Contributions from an entity directed and controlled by any person are aggregated with contributions made by that person and any other entity whose contributions are directed and controlled by that same person. The rule also applies to an entity that shares a majority of its members, officers, or is owned by the same majority shareholders.

Public Ethics Commission staff are available to answer your questions at (510) 238-3593 or ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov.