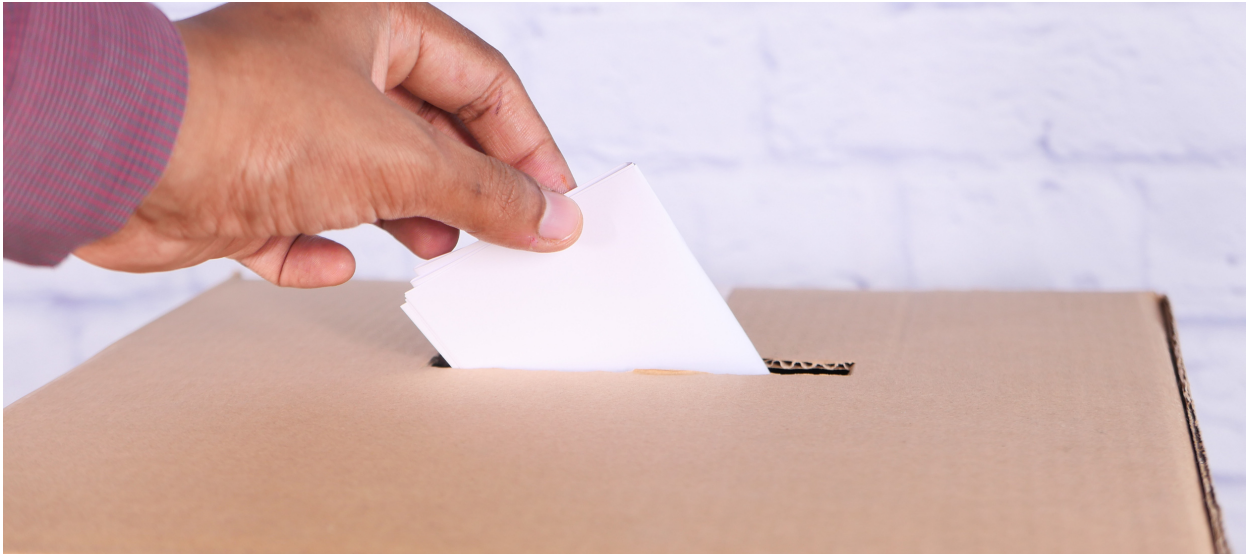


# QUICK GUIDE OF COOK COUNTY CAMPAIGN REGULATIONS FOR POLITICAL CANDIDATES

*Compiled by the Cook County Board of Ethics*



## INTRODUCTION

The Cook County Board of Ethics is responsible for enforcing the Cook County Ethics Ordinance. The Ethics Ordinance requires all Cook County officials and employees to abide by a Code of Conduct which sets forth general directives with the goal of creating a culture of fair and honest government in Cook County. The Code of Conduct applies to officials, employees, persons doing or seeking to do business with the County, persons regulated by the County, persons seeking official action by the County, and lobbyists.

This overview of Cook County definitions and select campaign regulations for political candidates is provided by the Cook County Board of Ethics. This guide provides relevant County ordinance information for County candidates and elected officials.

### **CONTACT US - WE ARE HERE TO HELP!**

Phone: 312-603-4304

Email: [cookcounty.ethics@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:cookcounty.ethics@cookcountyil.gov)

## DEFINITIONS

Cook County Code of Ordinances defines the following applicable terms in Section 2-562:

Candidate	Any person who has filed nominating papers or petitions for nomination or election to an elected office, or who has been appointed to fill a vacancy in nomination, and who remains eligible for placement on the ballot at either a general primary election or general election or who has raised or expended money in pursuit of elected office.
County	The County and all government agencies of the County.
Political Organization	A party, committee, association, fund, or other organization (whether or not incorporated) that is required to file a statement of organization with the State Board of Elections or a county clerk under Section 9.3 of the Election Code (10 ILCS 5/9-3), but only with regard to those activities that require filing with the State Board of Elections or a county clerk.
Single Candidacy	The time period during which a candidate is seeking office with primary election and general election being separate candidacies.



*Don't forget: As a candidate for Cook County office, you are responsible to comply with the Cook County Ethics Ordinance.*

# CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION LIMITS

Cook County Code of Ordinances [Section 2-585\(b\)\(1\) through \(3\)](#).

Anyone who does, has done, or is seeking to do a significant amount of business with the County (\$10,000 or more) during the preceding four years, is subject to the following campaign contribution limits:

\$1,500.00 in a calendar year to any current County official and any candidate for County office. This includes contributions to any associated local, state or federal political committees that are established in support of a specific candidate for County office.

**The intention is to permit total contribution up to, but not exceeding, \$1,500.00 in a calendar year.**

A calendar year is January 1 to December 31.

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Done business or Doing business means any one or any combination of sales, purchases, leases or contracts to, from or with the County or any County agency in excess of \$10,000 during the previous four years.

Seeking to do business means taking action within the past six months to obtain a contract or business with the County when, if such action were successful, it would result in the person doing business with the County. This includes responding to a request for qualifications (RFQ), joining a pool of pre-qualified vendors or any similar procurement vehicle. The presumption that such a person is seeking to do business will last for the same duration as any RFQ, pre-qualified pool or similar procurement vehicle remains valid for all qualified respondents.



## CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION LIMITS (CONT.)

The same campaign contribution limits apply to registered County lobbyists and those who are seeking official action from the county, a candidate or elected official. Seeking official action means a non-ministerial act, including entities that seek property tax relief for their clients through reassessments from the Cook County Assessor's Office.

### **No "Pay to Play"**

Contribution limitations are intended to safeguard against quid pro quo corruption or "pay to play" arrangements where a contributor makes a donation in exchange for the opportunity to do business with the County or obtain other favorable official action.

Remember that even lawful political contributions to County officials and candidates for County office are never a prerequisite to doing or continuing to do business with the County.



*For additional information, please see the "Campaign Finance Activity" guide located within the Downloads section of the Cook County Board of Ethics' [website](#).*

*Cook County Board of Ethics is not a regulating body for elections. Please contact Cook County Clerk's Office or the Illinois State Board of Elections, with questions about elections.*

# AUDITING PROCESS OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

Cook County Code of Ordinances [Section 2-585](#)

The Board of Ethics audits campaign contributions to affirm that they are within the limits established in Section 2-585. The procedure is as follows:

[1] The Board audits public campaign contribution disclosure records from the Illinois State Board of Elections to determine whether contributions to candidates for County office and County Elected Officials are in compliance with Cook County's campaign contribution limits.

[2] If, based on the audit, the Board determines the contributor has exceeded the limitations, the Board will send a formal notice to the campaign committee and contributor.

[3] The campaign contributor then has the opportunity to respond to demonstrate that (1) the Board's determination is incorrect; or (2) the contributor has complied with the Ethics Ordinance by obtaining reimbursement of the excessive contribution. The Board will determine if the response is sufficient in affirming compliance.

Failure to respond will result in a referral to the Board for further action.

If you have questions about this process, please call us.



# PROHIBITED USE OF COOK COUNTY'S SEAL IN CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

Cook County Code of Ordinances [Section 2-1\(d\)](#)

No one should use Cook County's seal for private purposes, including campaigning.

Additionally, no one should 'fraudulently forge, deface, corrupt, or counterfeit the seal of the County.'

This means, please do not use the Cook County seal in campaign materials without authorization.

Even with authorization to use the seal, please do not edit or otherwise change the seal (e.g., edit the colors, crop parts of the seal, use the seal as a watermark).

This guide is not legal advice. It is intended to help you understand the County's regulations for political candidates. For confidential, authoritative advice, please contact the Board of Ethics.



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