



Getting Started -- Ballot Question Committees

Committees that raise or spend money to support or oppose a question put to voters at a state election must organize with OCPF and file periodic campaign finance reports. If the question the committee was formed to support or oppose is put to voters in a municipal election, the committee must organize with their local election official: the city or town clerk or election commission. In either case, a ballot question committee is not intended to have an indefinite life; it must dissolve after the resolution of the question at the election.

[Important information](#) for business corporations or other organizations wanting to support or oppose a ballot questions.

FOR STATE BALLOT QUESTION COMMITTEES:

Step One: Set Up Your Committee with OCPF

- Appoint a Chairman and a [Treasurer](#) for your committee.
- Download and complete the [Form CPF 101 BQ](#): Statement of organization for a state ballot question committee. Bring in or mail the completed form to OCPF to receive your CPF ID number and password to the Electronic Filing System ([EFS](#)).

Step Two: Set Up Your Bank Account

- Your bank may ask you for a copy of your completed Statement of Organization (CPF 101 BQ).
- You should contact the bank in advance for further information about the bank's requirements to open an account. The campaign finance law does not have any special requirements about the type of account you open, but your bank may. The bank will not have any campaign finance reporting requirements for your account.
- Many banks require committees to obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) to open a campaign account. The IRS allows you to apply for an [EIN](#) online.
- Committees should also consult the [Massachusetts Department of Revenue](#) for information on any state tax requirements that may be applicable.
- Additional Help / Information:
 - OCPF Memorandum [M-89-02](#): Information on obtaining a Federal ID number and filing tax returns for political committees.

Step Three: Commence Recordkeeping and Reporting

- **Electronic Filing:** All committees file reports electronically according to this [reporting schedule](#). You will need to decide which method of electronic filing you wish to use:
 - You can download and install [Reporter 5](#), OCPF's free reporting software, or
 - You can log on to [Web Reporter](#), OCPF's online filing system. If you elect to use Web Reporter, you do not need to download or install any software on your computer.

NOTE: Reporter 5 is designed for PCs, if you use a Mac, you must use Web Reporter.

- **Paper Filing:** If the committee does not exceed the e-filing threshold, the committee may still use the Reporter software to prepare and print its reports or it may download and complete Form [CPF 102 BQ](#): Campaign finance report for a state ballot question committees. ([Instructions](#)).
- **Recordkeeping:** Committees must maintain detailed accounts of all contributions received and all expenditures made. These records must be kept separate and distinct from any other accounts or records and must be preserved for 6 years from the relevant election.
- **Additional Help / Information:**
 - Campaign Finance [Guide](#): State Ballot Question Committees.
 - OCPF Interpretive Bulletin [IB-90-02](#): Disclosure and Reporting of Contributions and/or Expenditures Relating to Ballot Questions.
 - Contribution Limits [Chart](#).
 - Public Employees and Campaigns: A [Fact Sheet](#).

FOR LOCAL (MUNICIPAL) BALLOT QUESTION COMMITTEES:

- Follow the steps outlined above to organize as a state ballot question **with the following exceptions:**
 - Instead of organizing with OCPF, download and complete a Form [CPF M 101 BQ](#): Statement of organization of a municipal political action committee. Bring in or mail the completed form to your local election official.
 - All of the committee's campaign finance reports will be filed on paper with your local election official, however, you may still want to download and install [Reporter 5](#), OCPF's free reporting software, to prepare and print your campaign finance reports.
- Once your committee is established, you will need to start reporting your campaign finance activity by filing campaign finance reports with your local election official. You will need to contact your local election official for your reporting schedule.
- To prepare the committee's campaign finance reports you can use either the Reporter software or the Form [CPF M 102](#): Municipal Campaign Finance Report ([Editable version](#)) ([Instructions](#)).
- Additional Help / Information:
 - Campaign Finance [Guide](#): Municipal Ballot Question Committees.
 - An [Overview](#) of Public Resources and Ballot Questions.
 - OCPF produced a short video explaining the basic rules concerning the use of public resources for political purposes. [VIDEO](#)
 - OCPF Interpretive Bulletin [IB-91-01](#): The Application of the Campaign

Finance Law to the Use of Governmental Resources for Political Purposes.

- OCPF Interpretive Bulletin [IB-92-02](#): Activities of Public Officials in Support of or Opposition to Ballot Questions.
- [Common errors](#) to avoid when filing.
- Contribution Limits [Chart](#).
- Public Employees and Campaigns: A [Fact Sheet](#).

http://www.mass.gov/ocpf/getting_started.htm