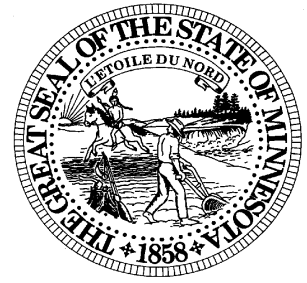


Minnesota

# *Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board*



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## **Notes on electronic filing Don't Panic!**

**Electronic filing is coming during the 2012 election year for most filers. But don't panic. The software, training, and support are free. And for those of you who have a valid reason not to file electronically, a process for obtaining a waiver will be available. In particular, see the discussion about waivers for small committees and non-computer-user treasurers at the end of this memo.**

### **The requirement**

Electronic filing of campaign finance reports will be mandatory for most committees beginning with reports covering calendar year 2012. **The electronic filing requirement does not apply to your 2011 year-end report.**

### **Why is electronic filing required?**

The requirement was enacted on the Board's recommendation as a means of enabling the Board to process increasing amounts of data with decreasing staff resources. Electronic filing eliminates the need for manual data entry of reports by Board staff and makes the data that enters Board systems more accurate.

### **What is electronic filing?**

Electronic filing is not filing by fax or email. Either of those methods sends the Board a picture of a report, not actual data. As a result, Board staff is still required to enter the data into Board systems.

Electronic filing is accomplished by using a software product provided by the Board or a third-party vendor to send the Board a file of data that can be placed directly into the Board's databases. The Board's software, training, and technical support are free.

### **You may be eligible for a waiver**

The Board is required to grant a waiver from the electronic filing requirement for any committee that has good cause for a waiver. Good cause means a valid reason – more than just not wanting to file electronically.

A waiver request process will be discussed at the Board's December, 2011 meeting. Once the process is in place, it will be announced on the Board's website.

**Anticipated waiver criteria:** Staff expects the Board to adopt criteria for general waivers for the following two reasons. Additional reasons for waivers will be considered on an individual basis.

#### **1. Waivers for small committees**

Some committees have too little financial activity to merit learning to use an electronic filing program. Staff will recommend that the Board adopt standards that would provide

automatic waivers for filers who have a history of raising and spending not more than \$5,000 in an election year and that expect to raise or spend not more than \$5,000 during 2012.

Committees with histories of raising or spending more than \$5,000 in previous elections may still be entitled to a waiver if they establish that their spending will be below \$5,000 in 2012.

**2. Waivers for treasurers who do not have internet access or do not own and use a computer.**

The purpose of the mandatory electronic filing requirement is not to require treasurers to pay for services they do not already have or to purchase computers and learn how to use them. The purpose of the requirement is to get people who already have the hardware and connectivity to use it to make the Board's operations more efficient.

People who do not have internet connectivity or do not own or use a computer will likely be granted a waiver. These waiver requests will be handled on a case by case basis and will require a waiver request.

**3. Waivers for MAC users.**

Mac users who have committees with a significant amount of financial activity are encouraged to obtain a Windows emulation program such as Parallels and convert to electronic filing. The Board provides technical support for implementation of Campaign Finance Reporter on a MAC. Nevertheless, it is likely that treasurers who only have reasonable access to Apple hardware and who request a waiver will be granted a waiver from the electronic filing requirement for 2012. These waiver requests will be handled on a case by case basis and will require a waiver request.

The Board will take up the matter of waivers at its December meeting. If you wish to submit written comments, they will be provided to the Board.

For questions, call Gary Goldsmith, Executive Director, at 651-296-1721 or send email to [gary.goldsmith@state.mn.us](mailto:gary.goldsmith@state.mn.us).