

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
FEBRUARY 23, 1993

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FEC: OVERWHELMED, REQUESTS \$2.6 MILLION INCREASE IN FISCAL '94 BUDGET

WASHINGTON -- Members of the Federal Election Commission testified today that the agency is "now virtually overwhelmed by the rapidly growing enforcement case load and by the wave of data flowing from the 1992 election" and requires a \$2.6 million increase in its fiscal 1994 budget.

FEC Vice Chairman Trevor Potter told a U.S. House appropriations subcommittee that the Commission is in "dire need" of a fiscal 1994 budget of \$23.6 million with 320 full-time employees. Much of the increase would be directed at improving the timeliness and efficiency of enforcement and audit programs, and at maintaining adequate public disclosure operations. Potter noted that President Clinton has stated campaign finance reform is a high domestic priority.

"It is the unanimous view of the Commission that these resources are urgently required, and that they are the bare minimum needed for the acceptable functioning of the FEC given its current responsibilities," said Potter, who appeared with Chairman Scott Thomas and Commissioner Danny Lee McDonald.

The Commission has witnessed dramatic increases in election activity in both disclosure and enforcement. For example, there are 200 more ongoing investigations involving 1,721 more respondents than at the end of 1991. Also the amount of political money tracked by the FEC has increased by \$1 billion since 1980.

"The very existence of a credible enforcement and disclosure process is at stake," said Potter, who heads the agency's finance committee. "If Congress and the President are serious about wanting us to do the job, then we ask that we be given the tools."

"We are deeply concerned that there are entire areas of the election laws that we currently lack the resources to monitor or enforce appropriately."

Potter noted that Commission had undertaken several "belt-tightening" actions in the past year including rigorous retraining of employees and reprioritizing enforcement and audit investigations.

The FEC's current budget woes would be compounded with the passage of any new election-related laws, such as the Motor Voter Bill or a new campaign finance statute, according to Commission testimony.

Even without new laws to administer and enforce, Commission projections forecast an extremely heavy workload for the 1994 election cycle:

- ** Dramatic increases in pending enforcement investigations. (At present, many of the enforcement attorneys have more than 20 ongoing cases each.
- ** More than 1,000,000 transactions from 75,000 documents will be reviewed and publicly released by the FEC.
- ** Candidates, committees, the press and public will make more than 200,000 requests for information or other assistance.
- ** The FEC will have to review the election activities of more than 2,000 candidates and 4,200 political action committees as well as hundreds of party committees.

Created in 1975, the FEC is the country's first and only independent executive agency responsible for administering and enforcing federal election laws. The Commission has exclusive jurisdiction over the financing of campaigns for the Presidency, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House. Primary responsibilities of the FEC include public disclosure of campaign finance, restrictions on contributions and expenditures made to influence federal elections, and the public financing of Presidential campaigns.

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