

# FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION



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## FEC'S MCDONALD CITES PROBLEMS IF COMMISSION FUNDING REDUCED

WASHINGTON -- Although assuring a Senate Committee that the Federal Election Commission is "especially mindful of the very tight fiscal climate," FEC Vice Chairman Danny McDonald today stressed again that proposed reductions in the Commission's FY 1995 budget request will hamper the agency in meeting its statutory responsibilities.

McDonald repeated to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration what he told a House appropriations subcommittee in March -- that the Commission's request for \$31.8 million and a staff level of 347 full-time equivalents (FTEs) is necessary to maintain currently authorized operations. The Office of Management and Budget has proposed an FEC authorization of approximately \$27.2 million and 294 FTEs.

"We try to agree with the Administration's proposed budget whenever we believe that we can meet our responsibilities within the requested constraints. Since we must disagree with OMB for FY 1995, we are pursuing our own request at this time," McDonald said.

He continued, "The OMB number is unacceptable to the Commission because it represents a reduction of at least 26 FTE from FY 1994 authorized FTE levels, and does not provide for the additional seven FTE required for the two computerization projects. In essence, existing programs would lose another seven FTE...".

McDonald also noted that the Commission's caseload "continues to explode," although the FEC last December closed almost a third of its enforcement cases. "Despite the decision to take no further action on those 137 matters, fewer than one half of the 407 remaining cases currently are being pursued. The rest still await assignment to an available attorney," McDonald told the panel. He added that the Commission can audit only 20 percent of the approximately 100 committees meeting the "for cause" review standard because of a lack of audit staff.

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Candidates for U.S. Senate and House seats in 1994 already have set a record in fundraising activity, with the \$254 million raised in the first 15 months of the election cycle being an increase of over \$6 million from a comparable point in 1991-92. McDonald noted that this comes on top of a record 1992 cycle.

The Commission predicts a record volume of work will continue in the 1994 elections, and could increase even more than predicted. "We must, therefore," said McDonald, "have at a minimum the funds to provide for a full 320 FTE in FY 1995, as authorized for FY 1994. It makes no sense for the Commission to staff up to 320 FTE, then immediately make a 180-degree change in direction and reduce the staff to 294 FTE or below."

He concluded, "We cannot process nearly \$2 billion of federal campaign activity, without experiencing degradations in the quality and timeliness of Commission operations, unless we receive the staff requested in FY 1994 and contained in this request for FY 1995. Productivity increases can provide only so much relief. Additional resources are vital for all activities."

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