

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

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1993-94 ELECTION CYCLE TRANSACTIONS SET RECORD PACE; PUBLIC'S USE OF FEC DATA CONTINUES TO GROW

WASHINGTON -- Preliminary statistics compiled by the Federal Election Commission show the agency setting a record pace for data processing and public disclosure in the 1993-94 election cycle.

As the Commission began computerizing final year-end reports, due January 31, staff had already completed 1.3 million transactions generated by almost 63,000 campaign finance reports. These disclosure reports are filed by PACs, political party committees, and candidates for federal office.

Transactions include contributions of \$200 or more from individuals to federal committees, as well as all contributions by PAC and party committees to candidates, other PACs, or other party committees. Each transaction is assigned a code and entered into the computer system.

FEC data coders have averaged 112,000 transactions in the 1993-94 election cycle to date, a two-year period that saw 2,350 candidates seeking federal office register with the FEC or on state ballots. Of that number, 1,646 candidates reported spending \$723 million. Preliminary numbers from the FEC indicate that total spending by all filers (candidates, PACs, political parties, independent expenditures, etc.) will reach some \$1.7 billion for the cycle.*

In addition to the aforementioned, FEC staff met the required 48-hour deadline for computerization of certain basic information from disclosure reports, despite the increased volume of reports, and keypunched more entries to provide information to the public on last-minute independent expenditures before election day.

Public use of FEC information and records continues to increase. In the 1993-94 election cycle, preliminary figures show 127,500 members of the public and media sought information, up from approximately 115,000 in 1989-90, the last Congressional election cycle. In order to better respond to a growing public demand for timely data, the FEC in recent years has implemented several new technologies, including:

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-- "Flashfax" provides instant automated facsimile accessibility to many FEC publications, available from an indexed menu through fax machines. (Menu of available material can be obtained by calling 202-501-3413, document number 411. Campaign finance reports are not included in this fax service.)

-- The Direct Access Program (DAP), a computerized on-line retrieval system, had 789 subscribers in 1994, up from 577 in 1993. DAP users have increased yearly, numbering only 181 in 1989, increasing to 253 in 1990, to 334 in 1991, and to 460 in 1992. (Information on DAP is available through "Flashfax," request document 306.)

-- "Document Imaging" allows public use of computer imaging technology, in which certain campaign finance reports can be scanned and viewed on computer screens.

The new or updated technologies within the FEC are a boon to the public, to the media, to government, and to candidates. The logical extension of the new technology is electronic filing of campaign finance reports by all candidates, PACs, and political party committees.

On Feb. 8, FEC Chairman Danny L. McDonald and Vice Chairman Lee Ann Elliott wrote to Rep. Jim Lightfoot, R-IA, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government, noting that electronic filing can improve the Commission's data base and make it easier for political committees to file reports with the agency.

Among a number of legislative recommendations submitted to Congress on Feb. 3, Chairman McDonald said that computerized filing of campaign reports and making the Commission the sole point of entry for disclosure reports (currently, Congressional campaign committees file their reports with the Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate) are issues the Commission sees as priorities for discussion with Congress.

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***MEDIA ADVISORY: FEC statistical analyses on the 1993-94 election cycle will be forthcoming in late March/early April.**

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