

# FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION



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## FEC SEEKS BUDGET APPROPRIATION OF \$30.8 MILLION FOR FY'97

WASHINGTON -- The Federal Election Commission has voted 5-0 to seek an appropriation of \$30.8 million to meet the myriad demands of this election year and the upcoming fiscal year. The Clinton Administration's FY'97 budget proposal contains \$29.3 million for operation of the FEC.

In a March 21 public meeting, the five commissioners (the sixth seat remains unfilled) approved a "justification document" to be dispatched to the Congress and the White House. The document states that the requested funding "will allow the agency to move forward with the computerization initiatives Congress has urged and at the same time avoid falling backward in our core programs of promoting public disclosure, ensuring compliance, administering the Presidential public funding program, and assisting state and local election officials."

For FY'96, Congress reduced the Administration's and FEC's request of \$29 million to \$26.5 million, but with \$1.5 million of the latter sum earmarked solely for internal computerization upgrading. On January 1, 1996, the filing location (point of entry) for House candidates was transferred from the Clerk of the House to the FEC, an action necessitating additional expense by the FEC, particularly in extending its digitized imaging technology.

As the justification document points out, from Oct. 1, 1996, to Sept. 30, 1997, the FEC will address the "most heated and active part of the 1996 election cycle in terms of its own workload....What is most significant for budget purposes is that the level of campaign finance activity has exploded in the last few election cycles and continues to grow. We project that the 1996 cycle will involve as much as \$2.5 billion, a 25 percent increase [over the 1992 presidential cycle]. This means that in FY 1997 the FEC will have to answer more questions, process more transactions, review more report pages, and deal with more potential audit or enforcement situations than ever before," the report emphasizes.

Spending by political committees reporting to the FEC will climb from about \$1.75 billion for the 1994 cycle to at

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least \$2.25 billion for the 1996 cycle, according to the report. The growing workload on the FEC due to that increased activity in campaign financing is shown through statistics in the report, including:

-- As of Feb. 29 of this year, 584,939 transactions had been entered into the FEC database, with an estimated total of 1,650,000 expected by the end of the election cycle;

-- FEC's Public Records Office processed 819,627 pages of documents in the 1992 election cycle and estimates 1,600,000 by the end of the 1996 election cycle;

-- the Public Information Office assisted 155,271 people in FY 1994 and expects to service 175,000 in this election year;

-- the FEC Press Office totaled 33,774 calls and visits from the media in FY'94 and estimates that number to exceed 35,000 through this fiscal year.

The report concludes, "The FEC is well aware of the desire to decrease the cost of government. We support that goal. Our productivity gains, use of technology, and carefully documented budget presentations over the years demonstrate this. As a responsible government agency we must identify factors outside of our control that increase our workloads. The increase in campaign spending is such a factor. It is real and dramatic. The challenge is determining how to address it. The FEC has been given a job to do by Congress. We ask for a reasonable amount of funding to perform that job."

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NOTE TO EDITORS/CORRESPONDENTS: Copies of the report, entitled "FY1997 Budget Justification and FY1996 Supplemental Appropriation Request" are available through the FEC Press Office.

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