



Fair Campaign Practices Commission

## **SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA MATERIAL for Supplemental Packet 2**

**Meeting Date:** February 4, 2020

**Item Number:** 2

**Item Description:** Amendments to the Berkeley Election Reform Act to prohibit Officeholder Accounts; Amending BMC Chapter 2.12

**Submitted by:** Samuel Harvey; Deputy City Attorney / Secretary, Fair Campaign Practices Commission

Attachment 4 to the report (“Memorandum signed by City Attorney Manuela Albuquerque”) included an attachment which was erroneously omitted from the Council item. Attached is Attachment 4 (for context) along with the additional pages which should be included to appear as pages 16 -17 of the item.



Office of the  
City Attorney

**DATE:** December 28, 1999

**TO:** BARBARA GILBERT,  
Aide to Mayor Shirley Dean

**FROM:** MANUELA ALBUQUERQUE, City Attorney *MA*  
By: CAMILLE COUREY, Deputy City Attorney

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION OF BERKELEY ELECTION REFORM ACT TO OFFICEHOLDER ACCOUNTS

ISSUE:

Does the Berkeley Election Reform Act (BERA) govern officeholder accounts?

CONCLUSION:

No. The BERA does not govern true officeholder accounts per se. However, the mere fact that an account may be designated an officeholder account does not insulate it from scrutiny under the BERA or other applicable local law if the officeholder account is not used strictly for officeholder purposes or if some action taken with respect to the officeholder account implicates campaign contributions and expenditures or other applicable local laws.

ANALYSIS:

Sarah Reynoso, former secretary and staff counsel to the Fair Campaign Practices Commission (FCPC), issued an opinion to the FCPC dated December 2, 1991, a copy of which is attached, stating that the BERA's contribution limit does not apply to contributions made to an officeholder account. The opinion reasons that the BERA's contribution limit applies only to "contributions" as defined in the BERA, i.e., which are made directly or indirectly in support of or in opposition to the nomination or election of one or more candidates to elective office. (See Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) § 2.12.100.) Contributions to a true officeholder account are not made for the purpose of nominating or electing a candidate to office, but rather for the use of an officeholder in carrying out the duties of his or her office. Therefore, the contribution limit of the BERA is inapplicable to officeholder accounts.<sup>1</sup> For similar reasons, the BERA does not

<sup>1</sup> However, the opinion also provided that contributions to officeholder accounts still had to be reported on campaign statements because the State Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) Regulations broadly defined contributions as any contribution for "political purposes." Since officeholder expenses are for political purposes, they must be reported to the State.

Barbara Gilbert

Re: Application of Berkeley Election Reform Act To Officeholder Accounts

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apply to true officeholder accounts.

The BERA requires the filing of statements to report the amounts received and expended in municipal elections. (See BMC §§ 2.12.015, 2.12.030 through 2.12.050) Specifically, a "campaign statement" required to be filed under the BERA is an itemized report which provides the information required by Sections 2.12.245 through 2.12.325 of the BERA. (BMC § 2.12.080.) Sections 2.12.245 through 2.12.325 govern the reporting of contributions and expenditures. "Contributions" and "expenditures" are defined by the BERA as any amounts received or expended, respectively, in aid of or in opposition to the nomination or election of one or more candidates to elective office. (See BMC §§ 2.12.100 and 2.12.130.) Contributions to or expenditures from a true officeholder account are not subject to the BERA's reporting requirements because they are made for the purpose of carrying out the duties of elective office, and not for the purpose of aiding or opposing the nomination or election of one or more candidates to elective office.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the BERA does not apply to true officeholder accounts.

However, the fact that an account may be designated as an officeholder account will not shield it from scrutiny under the BERA if the officeholder account is, in fact, being used for the receipt of contributions or the making of expenditures in aid of the nomination or election of a candidate for local elective office. Nor will BERA requirements, such as the \$250 contribution limit or the prohibition against contributions from businesses to candidates, be held inapplicable if contributions made initially to an officeholder account are transferred subsequently to a campaign account. Where the actions taken with respect to an officeholder account implicate campaign contributions and expenditures in municipal elections, the officeholder account will be scrutinized under the BERA and other applicable local law.

Attachment

cc: Fair Campaign Practices Commission  
Sherry Kelly, City Clerk

City Attorney Opinion Index: ILE 1. and IILG.

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<sup>2</sup> Again, however, the State FPPC still requires the reporting of activity relating to an officeholder account. (See footnote 1.)

CITY OF BERKELEY

DATE: December 9, 1991

Memorandum

TO: FCPC COMMISSIONERS

FROM: Sarah Reynoso,  Secretary & Staff Counsel

SUBJECT: APPLICABILITY OF BERA'S CONTRIBUTION LIMIT TO FUNDS RAISED FOR OFFICEHOLDER EXPENSES

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE

I received the attached letter from Richard N. Lerner, treasurer of Friends of Loni Hancock Committee ("Committee"), regarding the applicability of BERA's (Berkeley Election Reform Act) \$250 contribution limit to funds raised to cover officeholder expenses. The Committee would like to raise money to cover activities by the Mayor for which the City has not allocated funds, for example, distribution of a newsletter and international travel to visit Berkeley Sister Cities.

Thus, the issue presented to the Commission is as follows: Is BERA's \$250 contribution limit applicable to funds raised for officeholder expenses?

CONCLUSION

No. The BERA's contribution limitation is only applicable to money raised "in aid of or in opposition to the nomination or election" of a candidate. Since the Committee intends to raise these funds for activities unrelated to the nomination or election of the Mayor, they are not subject to the BERA's \$250 contribution limitation. However, such funds must be reported as contributions under the State Political Reform Act and their expenditure itemized on the disclosure forms.

ANALYSIS

The BERA prohibits candidates for elective office from soliciting or accepting a contribution of more than \$250 from any one contributor. (BERA section 2.12.415.) Thus, funds which fall within BERA's definition of a contribution, are subject to the \$250 limit. In order to determine whether funds raised for officeholder expenses are subject to the contribution limitation, BERA's definition of contribution must be reviewed.

The BERA defines contribution, in part, as follows:

"Contribution" means a gift, subscription, loan, advance, deposit, pledge, forgiveness of indebtedness, payment of a debt by a third party, contract, agreement, or promise of money or anything of value or other obligation, whether or not legally enforceable, made directly or indirectly in aid of or

in opposition to the nomination or election of one or more candidates . . . . (Emphasis added.)

Thus, the plain language of the BERA requires that a contribution be solicited for purposes related to the nomination or election of a candidate for office to be subject to its contribution limitation. Since the Committee intends to raise funds for purposes unrelated to the Mayor's nomination or election for elective office, such funds do not fall within the BERA's definition and are therefore not subject to its \$250 limitation.

However, because the state Political Reform Act defines contribution to include any funds raised for political purposes, funds raised for officeholder expenses are considered contributions and must be reported on campaign disclosure forms.<sup>1/</sup> (Government Code section 82015.) Additionally, since the court's ruling in SEIU v. FPPC invalidated the state's \$1,000 contribution limit, funds raised for officeholder expenses are not subject to any limitation.

As a final precaution, the Committee should be advised that the FPPC has issued regulations concerning officeholder expenses and it should review them with respect to their interaction with the BERA.

Attachment

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<sup>1/</sup>I spoke with the FPPC's legal staff and confirmed that funds raised for officeholder expenses must be reported as contributions on the campaign disclosure forms.