

HOW TO FIND MONEY INVOLVED IN COLORADO STATE & COUNTY POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Step 1 Check the Colorado Secretary of State [TRACER](#) system

[Political Race Search](#) Find candidates in political races.

[Candidate Search](#) Find candidate information, contributions and expenditures.

[Committee Search](#) Find committee contributions and expenditures.

[Contribution Search](#) Find out what groups and individuals made contributions.

[Expenditure Search](#) Find out what groups and individuals made expenditures.

[Independent Expenditure Detailed Report](#) Shows some expenditures by independent expenditure committees.

[Electioneering Report](#) Find money spent on political advertisements by groups not registered as committees.

[Data Download](#) Shows contribution and expenditure data for all county and state campaigns in Colorado.

Step 2 Check Nonprofits and Other Political Organizations: You may be aware of the involvement of nonprofits in the political campaigns you are researching. To find out if the group is a nonprofit search the Colorado Secretary of State [Business Database](#) or the Secretary of State in the nonprofit's home state. Unfortunately, the public can only view a nonprofit's total contributions and expenditures. There is no way to view itemized contributions and expenditures which show exactly who the money comes from and what it is spent on. A work around to this lack of information is searching [contributions](#) in TRACER, [Federal Election Commission](#) or [Internal Revenue Service](#) forms. [Guidestar](#) is a great source of information about nonprofits and their various IRS forms.

Step 3 Check Political Files: Political files or public inspection files are documents that show the purchase of advertisement space for political purposes by groups or individuals. You can search television and radio stations on the [Federal Communication Commission](#) website for political files. Usually FCC political files only contain the name of the buyer and a vague purpose and rarely shows the dollar amounts. Political files held by cable and satellite companies are available to the public in-person for a small per page fee. Political files from cable and satellite companies may be available online in the future. Comcast Spotlight handles advertisements and provides political files with dollar amounts.

Step 4 Check Other Sources: Other websites may provide additional information: [National Institute on Money in State Politics](#) for state campaign finance information; [Center for Responsive Politics](#) for federal campaign finance information.

Useful Websites		
Organization	Information	URL
Colorado Secretary of State TRACER	Colorado candidates & committees	http://tracer.sos.colorado.gov/PublicSite/homepage.aspx
Colorado Secretary of State Business Records	Colorado business records search	http://www.sos.state.co.us/biz/BusinessEntityCriteriaExt.do
Federal Election Commission	Federal candidates & committees	http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/candcmte_info.shtml
Internal Revenue Service	Political organizations	https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/political-organizations/political-organization-filing-and-disclosure
Federal Communications Commission	Political files	https://publicfiles.fcc.gov/
National Institute on Money in State Politics	State candidates, committees, lobbying	http://www.followthemoney.org/
Center for Responsive Politics	Federal candidates, committees, lobbying	https://www.opensecrets.org/
Guidestar	Nonprofits	http://www.guidestar.org/Home.aspx
ProPublica	Nonprofits	https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/

CONTRIBUTION LIMITS FOR STATE & COUNTY CANDIDATES IN COLORADO

Contributor	Recipient Candidate									
	Governor Lt Governor		Attorney General Secretary of State State Treasurer		State House of Representatives District Attorney CU Regent State Board of Education		State Senate		County Commissioner Sherriff Treasurer Clerk School Board Director	
	Primary	General	Primary	General	Primary	General	Primary	General		
Business other than corporation	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	No limit	No limit
Federal PAC (See Rule 7.1)	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	No limit	No limit
Natural Person	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	No limit	No limit
Political Committee	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$575	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	No limit	No limit
Small Donor Committee	\$6,125	\$6,125	\$6,125	\$6,125	\$2,425	\$2,425	\$2,425	\$2,425	No limit	No limit
Political Party Committee	\$615,075		\$123,000		\$15,975		\$22,125		No limit	No limit

Candidate committees, corporations, labor unions, independent expenditure committees, issue committees, foreign citizens and foreign governments are prohibited from contributing to candidates. Contribution limits are per the office's election cycle. Primary and general election contributions may be received at the same time. Consult IRS regulations regarding contributions made by 527 Political Organizations. Colorado law recognizes the Governor and Lt. Governor as one committee and the contribution and spending limits for governor apply to the joint committee. Contribution limits double for a candidate who has accepted voluntary spending limits if his or her opponent has not accepted the voluntary spending limits and has raised more than 10 percent of the spending limit. Contributions to a candidate committee by the candidate count as political party contributions when a candidate accepts voluntary spending limits. Any unexpended campaign contributions that carry forward to a subsequent election cycle also count as a political party contribution. All information found on the Colorado Secretary of State website <http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/CampaignFinance/limits/acceptance.html#top>

CONTRIBUTION LIMITS FOR STATE & COUNTY COMMITTEES IN COLORADO

Contributor	Recipient Committee				
	Issue Committee Support or oppose ballot issues	Independent Expenditure Committee Support or oppose candidates without coordinating with candidates or political parties	Political Committee per State House of Representatives election cycle Support, oppose & give money to candidates	Political Party Committee per calendar year Nominate & give money to candidates for general elections	Small Donor Committee per calendar year Support, oppose & give money to candidates
527 Political Organization	No limit	No limit	\$575	\$3,650**	Prohibited
Business other than corporation	No limit	No limit	\$575	\$3,650**	Prohibited
Candidate Committee	Prohibited	No limit	\$575*	\$3,650**	Prohibited
Corporation & Labor Union	No limit	No limit	\$575	Prohibited	Prohibited
Federal PAC (See Rule 7.1)	No limit	No limit	\$575	\$3,650**	Prohibited
Foreign Citizen	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
Foreign Corporation	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
Independent Expenditure Committee	Prohibited	No limit	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
Issue Committee	No limit	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
Natural Person	No limit	No limit	\$575	\$3,650**	\$50
Political Committee	Prohibited	No limit	\$575	\$3,650**	Prohibited
Political Party Committee	No limit	No limit	\$575	\$3,650**	Prohibited
Small Donor Committee	Prohibited	No limit	\$575	\$18,425***	Prohibited

* Only if the stated purpose of the political committee includes supporting the candidate who is contributing.

* State, county, district, & local levels combined of which no more than \$3,050 may be given to the state party.

*** State, county, district, & local levels combined of which no more than \$15,350 may be given to the state party.

All information found on the Colorado Secretary of State website

<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/CampaignFinance/limits/acceptance.html#top>

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN POLITICS

Characteristic	Nonprofit Organization				
	527	501(c)3	501(c)4	501(c)5	501(c)6
Type	Political	Charitable	Social welfare	Labor union	Business association
Jurisdiction	IRS	IRS	IRS, FEC	IRS, FEC, Department of Labor	IRS, FEC
Political Campaigns	Yes, unlimited	Prohibited	Yes, limited to half of total activities	Yes, limited to half of total activities	Yes, limited to half of total activities
Lobbying	Yes, limited to influencing candidate selection	Yes, limited to non-substantial	Yes, unlimited	Yes, unlimited	Yes, unlimited
Itemized Donors	Disclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed
Itemized Expenditures	Disclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed
Donations and expenditures are unlimited.					

POLITICAL ADVERTISING IN COLORADO

Characteristic	Type of Political Advertising in Colorado	
	Independent Expenditure	Electioneering Communication
Definition	Any material distributed by a person or entity that costs over \$1,000 to produce and states to vote for or against a Colorado state or county candidate	Any material distributed by a person or entity that costs over \$1,000 to produce and refers to a Colorado state or county candidate within 30 days of a primary election or 60 days of a general election
Who is required to report	Any person or entity	Any person or entity
Who is required to register as a committee	Any person or entity that makes an independent expenditure and receives money from the public must register as an independent expenditure committee	Not applicable
What words trigger reporting	States vote for or against candidate	Refers to candidate
Method of distribution	Mailer, billboard, poster, handout, phone, internet, TV, radio or any other means of advertising	Mailer, billboard, poster, handout, phone, internet, TV, radio or any other means of advertising
Dollar Threshold	Spend \$1,000 or more in calendar year	Spend \$1,000 or more in calendar year
Timing	Any time	Within 30 days of a primary election or 60 of general election
Notification	48 hours if within 30 days of a primary election or 30 days of a general election; otherwise regular filing deadlines	Bi-weekly filing
Paid for disclaimer on advertisement	Required	Only required if paid for by Independent Expenditure Committee or Issue Committee
Exemptions	None	Recalls

Any political advertisement outside of the timing window is not reported as an electioneering communication but some information may be found on political files held by the FCC, television and radio companies. Pitkin County may be exempt because it is a home rule county with its own campaign finance procedures.

WHERE TO FIND MONEY SPENT ON POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN COLORADO

Is the organization listed on the political advertisement registered with the [Colorado Secretary of State](#)?

