

WAC 390-17-400 Time limit to solicit or accept contributions.

The purpose of this rule is to clarify and implement the restriction period set forth in RCW 42.17A.560.

(1) "Campaign debt," as used in RCW 42.17A.560 and these rules, means any debt incurred by a candidate seeking election to a Washington state nonfederal public office, including campaigns for state, county, city, town, school district, special district or other state political subdivision elective office.

(2) "Known candidates" means individuals who are, or who become, candidates for state or local office during a legislative session freeze period.

(3) "Legislative session freeze period" means the period of time in RCW 42.17A.560 within which contributions shall not be solicited or accepted by a state official or a person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official.

(a) The freeze period begins at 12:01 a.m. on the thirtieth day before the start of the regular legislative session and ends at 11:59 p.m. on the day of adjournment of the regular legislative session.

(b) If a special session is held immediately following the end of the regular legislative session, the freeze period ends at 11:59 p.m. on the day the special session adjourns.

(c) If a special session is held other than within thirty days before a regular legislative session, the freeze period begins at 12:01 a.m. on the first day of the special session and ends at 11:59 p.m. on the final day of the special session.

(4) A successful candidate for state office who does not already hold a state office is not required to comply with RCW 42.17A.560 until sworn into office.

(5) A state official must comply with RCW 42.17A.560 until he or she no longer holds state office.

(6) Activities allowed during a freeze period. During a legislative session freeze period, the activities in which state officials may engage include, but are not limited to:

(a) Soliciting or accepting contributions to assist their own campaign for federal office;

(b) Accepting gifts or other items permitted under chapter 42.52 RCW, so long as the gift or other item is not

- A contribution to an incumbent state official or known candidate,
- A contribution to a public office fund,
- Used to pay a nonreimbursed public office related expense, or
- Used to retire a campaign debt;

(c) Attending and speaking at a fund-raising event held by or on behalf of a bona fide political party, so long as the contributions raised are not earmarked or otherwise designated for any incumbent state official or known candidate;

(d) Attending a fund-raiser held by a candidate who is not subject to RCW 42.17A.560, provided the state official does not solicit or accept any contributions in connection with the fund-raiser.

(i) The state official's planned attendance may be included in publicity for the fund-raiser.

(ii) The state official may receive complimentary admission from the candidate so long as the official attends to show support for the candidate and the attendance does not assist the official's own campaign.

(e) Transferring their own personal funds, as defined in WAC 390-17-305, or their own surplus funds, as defined in RCW 42.17A.005, to their own campaign account, so long as the funds are properly reported;

(f) Soliciting or accepting contributions on behalf of a nonprofit charity; or

(g) Soliciting or accepting contributions on behalf of any political committee, including a caucus political committee, a bona fide political party or a ballot measure committee, so long as the political committee does not spend the contributions for the benefit of incumbent state officials or known candidates.

(7) Activities not allowed during a freeze period. During a legislative session freeze period, a state official, or a person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official, may not solicit or accept contributions that:

(a) Go to an incumbent state official or known candidate;

(b) Go to a public office fund;

(c) Are used to pay a nonreimbursed public office related expense;

(d) Are used to retire a campaign debt;

(e) Go to a caucus political committee if the committee spends the contributions for the benefit of incumbent state officials or known candidates; or

(f) Go to a bona fide political party or a political committee if the political party or committee spends the contributions for the benefit of incumbent state officials or known candidates.

(8) "Person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official" includes a caucus political committee or any political committee financed or controlled by a legislative caucus as a whole or by one or more officers of a caucus political committee.

(a) During a legislative session freeze period, a person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official may not solicit or accept contributions for any of the purposes specified in subsection (7) of this section.

(b) During a legislative session freeze period, a caucus political committee may solicit or accept contributions from caucus members if the members make the contributions with their own personal funds, as defined in WAC 390-17-305, or with their own surplus funds, as defined in RCW 42.17A.005.

(c) During a legislative session freeze period, a caucus political committee may not solicit or accept contributions for any of the purposes specified in subsection (7) of this rule.

(9) Bona fide political parties. During a legislative session freeze period, a bona fide political party may not solicit or accept contributions that are

- Used for a public office fund,
- Used for a state official's nonreimbursed public office related expenses,
- Used for retiring a state official's campaign debt, or
- Earmarked contributions to specific incumbent state officials or known candidates.

However, a bona fide political party may solicit or accept contributions for its own fund-raising purposes.

(10) Segregating session freeze funds. During a legislative session freeze period, if a state official, a caucus political committee,

or another person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official solicits or accepts contributions to

- A caucus political committee,
- A bona fide political party, or
- Any political committee that supports or opposes state or local office candidates, the contributions are presumed to violate RCW 42.17A.560, unless the contributions are deposited into a separate bank account and not spent for the benefit of incumbent state officials or known candidates.

However, nothing in this subsection authorizes a state official, a caucus political committee or any person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official to take any of the actions prohibited by subsection (7) or (8)(c) of this section.

(11) Session freeze solicitations. If a person is solicited for a contribution during the legislative session freeze period by a state official, a caucus political committee, or another person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official; and the contribution is to a caucus political committee, a bona fide political party, or a political committee that supports or opposes candidates for state or local office; and the person makes a contribution during or after the freeze period in response to this solicitation; then the contribution is subject to RCW 42.17A.560 and subsection (12) of this section.

(12) Spending contributions to benefit incumbents or known candidates. For purposes of complying with subsections (6)(g), (7)(e) and (f), and (10) of this section, contributions are considered spent for the benefit of incumbent state officials or known candidates if the contributions are used at any time for one or more of the following purposes:

(a) Contributions to incumbent state officials or known candidates;

(b) Independent expenditures supporting incumbent state officials or known candidates, or opposing their opponents, whether or not the opponents are themselves known candidates during a legislative session freeze period;

(c) Payments to staff, consultants or advisors for performing activities that directly assist or promote the election of incumbent state officials or known candidates; or

(d) Polls or surveys that relate to incumbent state officials, known candidates or their districts, or to general voter attitudes or preferences, unless

- A poll or survey is produced, conducted, tabulated and analyzed according to the terms of a written confidentiality agreement and, if the agreement is breached, all reasonable steps are taken to enforce it, and
- The results of a poll or survey are not provided by the spender, or with the spender's permission or prior knowledge, to incumbent state officials, known candidates or their agents.

However, candidate recruitment poll or survey results may be provided to an individual who later becomes a known candidate without the expenditure being considered as benefiting a known candidate so long as the poll or survey does not constitute a contribution to the individual or does not otherwise support or promote his or her election to state or local office. For purposes of this subsection, a "candidate recruitment poll or survey" is a poll or survey that is conducted for

the sole purpose of recruiting candidates to run for public office and only determines

- The respondent's party preference;
- The level of support the incumbent currently has and how strong that support is, but not why he or she has that support;
- Whether respondents recognize the names of individuals who may decide to seek that elective office;
- Whether respondents currently hold a favorable opinion about these individuals, their abilities or fitness for elective office, but not why such opinions are held;
- Whether respondents would likely vote for one or more of these individuals were they to seek office, but not why respondents would vote in the manner they indicated or whether they could be persuaded to change their vote; and
- The validity of the poll or survey results.

(e) Any other expenditure that directly benefits or promotes the election to state or local office of incumbent state officials or known candidates.

(13) For online or credit card contributions, the contribution is considered received at the time the transfer is made from the merchant account to a candidate or political committee account, except that a contribution made to a candidate who is a state official or legislator outside the restriction period established in RCW 42.17A.560, but transferred to the candidate's account within the restricted period, is considered received outside of the restriction period.

(a) Any such contributions should be reported as received on the date the transfer is made from the merchant account to a candidate or political committee account.

(b) The PDC may request that the state official or legislator document that the contribution was received by the merchant account outside the restriction period.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17A.110(1) and 2018 c 304. WSR 18-24-074, § 390-17-400, filed 11/30/18, effective 12/31/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17A.110, 42.17A.125(1). WSR 16-04-081, § 390-17-400, filed 1/29/16, effective 2/29/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17A.110. WSR 12-03-002, § 390-17-400, filed 1/4/12, effective 2/4/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.370. WSR 08-01-062 and 08-06-067, § 390-17-400, filed 12/14/07 and 3/3/08, effective 1/14/08 and 4/3/08. Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.370(1). WSR 98-23-016, § 390-17-400, filed 11/6/98, effective 12/7/98; WSR 96-01-103, § 390-17-400, filed 12/19/95, effective 1/19/96. Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.370. WSR 93-16-064, § 390-17-400, filed 7/30/93, effective 8/30/93.]