RECORD

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# SUNSHINE ACT RULES PRESCRIBED

On October 1, 1985, the Commission published in the <u>Federal Register</u> the final, revised version of its Sunshine Act Regulations. See 11 CFR Part 2. Approved by the Commission on September 26, 1985, the rules of 11 CFR Parts 2 and 3 have been modified and consolidated into a single part, called Part 2. See 50 <u>Federal Register</u> 39968. The revised rules:

- Provide a more complete statement about matters which may be discussed in closed meetings (i.e., matters exempted from discussion in open meetings);
- o Clarify the procedures for closing meetings;
- Provide new procedures for processing requests for transcripts and recordings of closed meeting discussions; and
- o Explain open meeting procedures more fully.

The Commission announced that the revised Sunshine Act Regulations will become effective on October 31, 30 days after their publication in the <u>Federal Register</u>. This 30-day period will allow FEC staff sufficient time to begin operating under the revised rules.

The major revisions to the Sunshine Act rules are highlighted below.

# Exemptions from the Open Meeting Requirement

The revised rules clarify the distinction between matters that may be exempted from open meeting discussions under one of the discretionary exemptions in the Sunshine Act and matters that must be exempted under the confidentiality provision in the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) or other relevant statutes. This distinction is important because, under the Sunshine Act, the Commission has the power to waive a discretionary exemption and discuss a matter in public session. The confidentiality requirements of the FECA and other relevant statutes, however, may not be waived. This distinction also affects the procedures for public disclosure of information that no longer qualifies for the exemptions. See Transcripts and Recordings below.

In keeping with recent court decisions, the revised rules exempt from public meetings any discussions or materials that would reveal FEC enforcement guidelines because such disclosure would risk circumvention of FEC rules.\* The rules exempt, for example, discussions of investigatory techniques and audits, and documents (such as staff compliance manuals) that reveal compliance thresholds.

# **Procedures for Closing Meetings**

The Commission has revised its procedures for closing meetings. The agency has also added a provision which allows parties to request that a Commission meeting be closed if their interests are directly affected by a discussion. A requester must: 1) submit a written request to the FEC's chairman and 2) specify those exemptions (listed under 11 CFR 2.4) that would permit closing the discussion. The Commission will then vote on the request. A statement accompanying the revised rules notes that this new procedure does not grant a requester the right to compel the closing of a meeting. Nor does the procedure entitle the requester to a hearing on the request or to otherwise participate in an FEC meeting.

# Transcripts and Recordings

The revised rules explain more fully the Commission's procedures for releasing transcripts and recordings of closed meeting discussions, once relevant disclosure exemptions no longer apply. continued

\*See especially the district court's ruling in Fund for a Conservative Majority v. FEC, summarized on p. 3 of the June 1985 <u>Record</u>.

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# INFORMATION

5 Campaign Finance Report Filing Offices With regard to matters exempted under one of the discretionary exemptions provided by the Sunshine Act (11 CFR 2.4(b)), the Commission will determine at the end of each closed session whether the relevant exemption still applies. If the exemption can no longer be claimed, the Commission will review the transcript or tape to be sure no other exemption applies. Once reviewed, the materials will be made available to the public.

With regard to discussions of enforcement matters and other materials that cannot be made immediately available, the Commission will continue its past practice of reviewing material, on request, and releasing those portions that are no longer entitled to any exemption.

The rules have been slightly revised to indicate that closed session records will be retained for a minimum of two years, or one year after the conclusion of an enforcement matter, whichever is later. This provision conforms with the Sunshine Act's minimum requirement. In practice, however, the Commission retains such documentation indefinitely for historical purposes.

# Definitions and Miscellaneous Provisions

The revised rules refine the definition of "meeting" by explaining those circumstances that would not constitute a "meeting" as, for example, notation voting by the Commissioners. (Notation voting, used to expedite consideration of routine matters, is a process whereby Commissioners note their approval or disapproval of a given matter on a memo circulated to all Commissioners.) Additionally, the rules make clear that the statements made by Commissioners and staff at meetings should not be construed as final FEC determinations or beliefs.

The revised rules explain that members of the press who plan to use cameras or large electronic recording equipment at FEC open sessions should notify the FEC's Press Officer in advance. The purpose of this requirement is to give the Press Officer an opportunity to coordinate news coverage under limited space conditions.



# FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICES

Copies of this notice are available in the Public Records Office.

# Notice Title

1985-11 11 CFR Parts 2 and 3: Sunshine Act Regulations: Final Rules; Announcement of Effective Date (50 Fed. Reg. 39968, October 1, 1985)



# ADVISORY OPINION REQUESTS

The following chart lists recent requests for advisory opinions (AORs). The full text of each AOR is available to the public in the Commission's Office of Public Records.

- AOR Subject
- 1985-30 Activities of authorized candidate committee converted to multicandidate committee. (Date made public: September 17, 1985; Length: 1 page)
- 1985-31 Affiliation of insurance corporation and agencies for purposes of PAC solicitations. (Date made public: September 26, 1985; Length: 3 pages, plus 41-page supplement)
- 1985-32 Disclosure of costs for Congressional reception sponsored by two trade associations. (Date made public: October 9, 1985; Length: 1 page)
- 1985-33 Personal loans to candidate loaned to candidate's committee. (Date made public: October 10, 1985; Length: 1 page)
- 1985-34 Nonconnected PAC's purchase and use of life insurance policy on its chairman. (Date made public: October 15, 1985; Length: 2 pages)

The <u>Record</u> is published by the Federal Election Commission, 1325 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20463. Commissioners are: John Warren McGarry, Chairman; Joan D. Aikens, Vice Chairman; Lee Ann Elliott; Danny Lee McDonald; Thomas E. Harris; Thomas J. Josefiak; Jo-Anne L. Coe, Secretary of the Senate, Ex Officio; Benjamin J. Guthrie, Clerk of the House of Representatives, Ex Officio. For more information, call 202/523-4068 or toll-free 800/424-9530.

# ADVISORY OPINIONS: SUMMARIES

An Advisory Opinion (AO) issued by the Commission provides guidance with regard to the specific situation described in the AOR. Any qualified person who has requested an AO and acts in accordance with the opinion will not be subject to any sanctions under the Act. Other persons may rely on the opinion if they are involved in a specific activity which is indistinguishable in all material aspects from the activity discussed in the AO. Those seeking guidance for their own activity, however, should consult the full text of an AO and not rely only on the summary given here.

# AO 1985-24: Unincorporated Membership Organization Prohibited from Establishing Separate Segregated Fund

The National Football League (NFL), an unincorporated, nonprofit membership organization consisting of 28 professional football teams, may not use its treasury funds to establish, administer or solicit contributions to a separate segregated fund under 2 U.S.C. \$441b(b)(2)(C). Since NFL may not establish a separate segregated fund (i.e., a political action committee or PAC), the Commission did not address the issue of which personnel would be solicitable by the proposed PAC. See 11 CFR 112.1(b).

Section 441b of the Act prohibits corporations\* (including incorporated membership organizations) from making contributions or expenditures in connection with federal elections. As an exception to this broad prohibition, an incorporated organization may pay the costs of establishing and administering a separate segregated fund which may, in turn, solicit voluntary contributions from the corporation's solicitable class. See 2 U.S.C. \$\$441b(b)(2)(C) and 431(8)(B)(vi); 11 CFR 114.1(a)(2)(iii), 100.7(b)(10) and 100.8(b)(11). How~ ever, as an unincorporated membership organization, the NFL is not eligible for this exception. The different treatment that the election law accords unincorporated and incorporated organizations was upheld by both the U.S. Appeals Court for the Ninth Circuit and the Supreme Court in California Medical Association v. FEC. 641 F.2d 619, 630 (9th Cir. 1980), aff'd, 453 U.S. 182 (1981). (Date issued: September 23, 1985; Length: 5 pages)

# AO 1985-25: Reattribution of Excessive Contributions to Spouse

In May 1985, the Steve Bartlett Congressional Campaign Committee (the Committee), the principal campaign committee for Mr. Bartlett's House campaign, held a picnic fundraiser. Subsequently, some of the picnic ticket purchasers made additional contributions to the Committee which, when added to their ticket purchases, caused them to exceed their respective \$1,000 per election limits. As an alternative to refunding the excessive portion of a donor's contributions, the Committee may reattribute the excessive amount to a donor's spouse, provided the requirements outlined below are met.

# Proposed Reattribution Procedure

Under the Committee's proposal, the Committee will send a letter and contribution reattribution form to any married individual who made excessive contributions to Mr. Bartlett's campaign and who did not attribute any portion of his/her contributions to a spouse. The letter will itemize the contributions and inform the donor of: 1) the election law's contribution limits and 2) the donor's option to attribute the excessive portion of the contributions to his/her spouse's contribution limit. The contribution reattribution form, which must be returned to the committee, will include: each spouse's signature and information on the contribution (date, amount and election).

# Reattribution Requirements

Under FEC Regulations, a husband and wife may each contribute up to \$1,000 to the same candidate for the same election, even if they are a single-income family. If, however, they make a joint contribution by a single check, each spouse must sign the check or an accompanying statement specifying the amount to be attributed to each one. 11 CFR 110.1(i)(1) and 100.7(a).

The Committee's proposed letter and reattribution form meet these requirements. However, to ensure that the reattribution procedure does not circumvent the Act's contribution limits, the Committee must also fulfill the following conditions:

- o Before mailing the letter and form, the Committee should have a reasonable basis for concluding that the contributions were made by a married individual.
- o The Committee may seek a reattribution only if the aggregate contributions made by husband and wife do not exceed \$2,000 per election.
- o The Committee must revise the letter to inform the contributor that he or she may request a refund of the excessive amount rather than reattribute it to a spouse.
- o If a contributor and his/her spouse do not send back a signed form authorizing the reattribu-

<sup>\*</sup>Organizations covered by the prohibition include: corporations with capital stock, national banks, incorporated membership organizations, corporations without capital stock, incorporated trade associations, incorporated cooperatives and labor organizations.

tion, the Committee must refund the excessive portion of a contribution within 30 days of its receipt.

- o If the contributor requests a refund, the Committee must make it promptly, i.e., within 10 days.
- o The Committee must keep written, up-to-date records on relevant details of Committee requests for reattributions and the disposition of each.
- o The Committee must report all deposits and refunds of the excessive contributions. 2 U.S.C. \$434(b); 11 CFR 103.3(b)(2).

(Date issued: September 30, 1985; Length: 4 pages)



# FEC v. KIRK WALSH FOR CONGRESS COMMITTEE

On September 20, 1985, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, Southern Division, issued an opinion which held the Kirk Walsh for Congress Committee (the Committee) and its treasurer, Kirk Walsh, in contempt for failing to comply with a default judgment entered against the Committee in April 1985. (Civil Action No. 84-9802)

In the April 1985 default judgment, the court had ordered the Committee, Mr. Walsh's principal campaign committee for his 1980 House campaign, to take the following actions within 30 days:

- o File a 30 day post-general election report for 1980 and mid-year and year-end reports for 1981, 1982 and 1983;
- o Pay a \$5,000 civil penalty to the U.S. Treasury; and
- o Pay court costs incurred by the FEC in pursuing the action.

In its contempt order, the court ordered the Committee and Mr. Walsh to comply with the default judgment by October 11, 1985. In the event the Committee failed to meet the deadline, the court would assess a fine of \$2,000 and \$100 per day until the Committee fully complied with the court's orders. (As of October 11, 1985, the respondents had not complied with the court's order.)

The court also ordered the Committee and Mr. Walsh to pay costs and attorney fees incurred by the Commission in bringing this action.

# NEW LITIGATION

# FEC v. NCPAC (Second Suit)

The FEC filed suit against the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), a nonconnected political committee, and its treasurer, Leif E. Noren, with regard to independent expenditures NCPAC made to advocate President Reagan's reelection in 1984. As part of its independent expenditure activities conducted between April and July 1984, NCPAC mailed solicitation materials to approximately 955,750 persons.

The FEC asks the district court to:

- o Declare that defendants violated 2 U.S.C. \$441d(a)(3) by failing to include on the solicitation materials a statement clearly identifying NCPAC as the sponsor of the solicitation mailings;
- o Assess a civil penalty against defendants amounting to the greater of \$5,000 or an amount equal to 100 percent of the amount involved in the violation (approximately \$373,000); and
- o Permanently enjoin defendants from further violations of the election law.

U.S. District Court for the District of Co-Iumbia, Civil Action No. 85-2898, September 12, 1985.

# FEC v. John A. Dramesi for Congress

The FEC asks the district court to declare that Mr. Dramesi's 1982 House campaign, John A. Dramesi for Congress Committee (the Committee), and its treasurer, Russel E. Paul, violated the election law by accepting an excessive contribution from the New Jersey Republican State Committee and by failing to refund the excessive portion of the contribution (i.e., \$4,000) to the state party committee. See 2 U.S.C. \$441a(f); 11 CFR 103.3(b)(1) and (2). At the time the state party committee made the \$5,000 contribution, it had not achieved multicandidate committee status and was, therefore, only eligible to make a \$1,000 contribution to the Committee.\*

The FEC further asks the court to:

- o Assess a \$5,000 civil penalty against the Committee or an amount equal to 100 percent of the amounts involved in the violation; and
- o Order the Committee and its treasurer to refund the excessive portion of the contribution to the state party committee.

U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, Civil Action No. 85-4039, August 19, 1985.

\*Multicandidate committees may contribute up to \$5,000 per election to a candidate's authorized committee(s). To achieve multicandidate committee status, a state party committee must have more than 50 contributors and have been registered for at least six months. 2 U.S.C. 441a(a)(4); 11 CFR 100.5(e)(3).



Copies of federal campaign finance reports may be reviewed and copied by the public at the locations listed below. Note that the federal election law places restrictions on the use of information copied from campaign finance reports and statements. They "may not be sold, or used by any person for the purpose of soliciting contributions or for commercial purposes, other than using the name and address of any political committee to solicit contributions from such committees." 2 U.S.C. \$438(a)(4).

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This cumulative index lists advisory opinions, court cases and 800 Line articles published in the Record during 1985. The first number in the citation refers to the "number" (month) of the Record issue; the second number, following the colon, indicates the page number in that issue.

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