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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 23, 2009

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PACs break contribution record in 2007-08 election cycle

Political action committees in Massachusetts set several records in the last election cycle, including new highs for total contributions made to state and county candidates and total overall expenditures, according to an Office of Campaign and Political Finance study of PAC activity during the 2007-08 election cycle.

PACs contributed a total of \$2,684,944 to state and county candidates in 2007-08, eclipsing the previous record set in 2005-06 by \$87,967. State candidates run for any of the six statewide constitutional offices (governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, treasurer, secretary of state and auditor), Governor's Council, Senate and House of Representatives. County candidates include campaigns for district attorney, sheriff, commissioner, clerk of courts, treasurer, register of deeds and register of probate.

A new high was also reached in aggregate PAC expenditures for a two-year cycle. PACs reported total expenditures of \$5.8 million in 2007-08, breaking the previous record of \$5.6 million set during the previous two-year election cycle. Nearly half of the money went toward contributions to state, county and some municipal candidates. The remainder was used for such expenses as administrative costs, as well as contributions to other PACs, parties and ballot question committees.

The 2007-08 PAC totals reflect a continuing trend of growth in PAC activity since the mid-1990s, when changes in the law led to a drop in the number of PACs. In the past 15 years,



PACs have seen increases in aggregate expenditures, contributions and the total number of PACs giving to candidates.

A total of 455 candidates were reported as recipients of at least one PAC contribution in 2007-08: 418 on the state or county level and 37 on the local level. The totals do not include municipal-level PACs that made contributions to local candidates.

On average, state and county candidates each received \$4,118 in 2008 and \$4,088 in 2007 in PAC contributions. The average single contribution from a PAC to a candidate for each year was \$295. The campaign finance law sets an aggregate annual limit on what an individual candidate may receive in total from all PACs. The limit ranges from \$150,000 for a candidate for governor to \$18,750 for a Senate candidate and \$7,500 for a House candidate.

According to the state campaign finance law, a PAC is any committee, association, organization or other group of people that receives contributions or makes expenditures for the purpose of influencing the nomination or election of a candidate or candidates. State PACs organize with OCPF and file regular campaign finance disclosure reports with the office.

A copy of the full study is available at the OCPF Web site, www.mass.gov/ocpf, under the "OCPF Studies" tab.