

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Campaign and Political Finance

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CONTACT: Denis Kennedy
Director of Public Information
(617) 727-8352 / (800) 462-6273

PAC activity increases in 1999-2000 election cycle, according to OCPF study

Contributions to state and county candidates by political action committees exceeded \$2 million in 1999-2000, continuing a rise from an all-time low in the mid-1990s, according to a new study from the Office of Campaign and Political Finance.

The study, which was released today, states that Massachusetts PACs reported contributions to state and county candidates of \$961,840 in 1999 and \$1,092,639 in 2000, for a two-year total of \$2,054,479. (Contributions to local candidates in cities and towns by PACs amounted to an additional \$383,055 over the two-year period. These local figures are not included in the OCPF study.)

The two-year total of contributions to state and county candidates is the fourth highest of any election cycle since OCPF began tracking and publishing total PAC activity in 1982. The cycle featuring the highest total contributions was 1989-90 (\$2,289,158). The 1999-2000 figure is about \$82,000 less than the contribution total for the 1997-98 cycle.

For individual years, the PAC contribution figure for 2000 ranks as the sixth largest overall and represents a drop of about \$154,000 from 1998. The largest annual aggregate figure was achieved in 1994, when PACs gave \$1,401,299 to candidates. The 1999 contribution figure ranks as the highest total for a non-election year, eclipsing the previous record of \$912,250 contributed in 1989.

Activity by PACs has been on the increase since 1996, when changes in the law led to the lowest annual aggregate contribution figure in a decade and an all-time low in the average contribution. The lowest annual PAC contribution total ever recorded by OCPF was in 1983, when an aggregate of \$358,448 was posted.

The 1999-2000 study is based on reports filed by the political action committees and people's committees, an offshoot of PACs created by the 1994 campaign finance reform law.

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These committees filed on the same schedule as legislative candidates: one report covering 1999 and three covering 2000.

Other findings from the study:

- PACs reported spending a total of \$4,434,006 in the 1999-2000 election cycle, which represents an increase of 14 percent from the \$3,904,279 reported in 1997-98. Total spending includes administrative and fundraising expenses as well as contributions to other political committees, including federal and state party committees, local and federal candidates not registered with OCPF and ballot question committees.
- Labor, business and professional interests continued to account for the most active PACs in 1999-2000. Of the Top 20 PACs for total contributions to candidates in the cycle, 16 represented labor groups such as unions, including firefighters, electrical workers and public employees, both active and retired. The remaining six PACs in the Top 20 represent business or professional groups, including beer distributors, chiropractors and bankers.
- Statistics from 1999-2000 showed the preferred recipients of PAC money in past cycles – candidates for the Legislature, winning candidates, Democrats and incumbents -- continued to receive a substantial majority of contributions.
- The number of PACs organized with OCPF remained at slightly below 300 for the cycle. However, 200 PACs actually made contributions in 1999-2000, the highest total since 1992.
- The average PAC contribution was \$221 in 1999, down \$4 from the year before, and \$228 in 2000. The average in 2000 was the highest since 1994, when the average contribution was \$270, but well below the record average of \$332 posted in 1983.
- Once again, PACs ended the period covered in this report with more funds than they started with. The committees reported cash on hand of about \$3.06 million at the start of 1999 and a cumulative ending balance of about \$3.38 million at the end of 2000.

A copy of the study is available on OCPF's website, www.state.ma.us/ocpf. Also available is OCPF's study of activity by state ballot question committees in 2000. OCPF's third and final report covering election year activity, focusing on candidates for the General Court, will be published in the coming weeks.