



All about bank accounts

Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

Do we need a bank account?

A candidate committee, political committee, or party unit must have its own bank account. A candidate committee, political committee, or party unit cannot mix its funds with any other money. All money received by a candidate committee, political committee, or party unit must be deposited into the entity's bank account.

Generally, an association that has a political fund does not need a separate bank account for the fund, but it must have an accounting system that tracks the money that constitutes the political fund. However, if the association accepts more than \$1,500 in contributions specifically to influence the nomination or election of candidates or more than \$5,000 in contributions specifically to promote or defeat a ballot question, the association must have a separate bank account for those contributions. All money that constitutes an association's political fund must be deposited into the association's bank account or into the political fund's bank account if the association maintains a separate bank account for the fund.

What should we call the account?

The bank account must be called the "Campaign Fund of (name of entity)." The name on the check, however, can be the name of the committee, fund, or party unit. Because committees, funds, and party units registered with the Board must provide their registration numbers with their contributions, many committees, funds, and party units have their registration numbers imprinted on their checks.

Who should have access to the account?

The treasurer must have signing authority for the account. It is strongly suggested that the candidate, the chair of the committee or party unit, or some other person in the group also have signing authority for the account. The secondary signer, however, should not regularly write checks. Instead, the secondary signer's role should be to be available in case the treasurer resigns suddenly or is unable to carry out the job's duties. This is also a good tool for financial control because it ensures that at least two people have access to the official bank records. Duplicate bank statements or online viewing access also is a recommended best practice.

How do we get an IRS identification number?

To open a bank account, you need an identification number from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS has two types of identification numbers: an individual number (TIN) and an employer number (EIN). The IRS gives EINs to political organizations, even those who are not actually employers. For more information on IRS identification numbers, see the information sheet on how to get a federal tax number.

Some candidates decide to open their campaign checking accounts as personal accounts. The bank will let you know if this is an option. If it is, the committee will use the candidate's social security number as its identification number. Candidates who open these types of accounts should be aware that if the money in the account is ever garnished to pay the candidate's personal debts, the candidate will be liable for reimbursing the account.

When do we need to deposit contributions?

In general, you must deposit contributions within 10 business days of receiving the money. You may want to make copies of any checks before you deposit them because this may make it easier to reconcile your financial records.