Interim Processes for Electronic Filing – County Boards of Election

This document will assist with processes for handling electronic filers, until the new software is available. Questions should be directed to campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov.

You should have already received the Electronic Filing FAQ document, which was designed for campaign committees that may have questions about electronic filing. This is also included at the end of this manual. Some of your questions may have already been answered in this document.

Who is required to file electronic reports?

Any committee that raises or spends in excess of $10,000.00 for the election cycle is required to start filing electronic reports, once they exceed the $10,000.00 threshold.

You need to determine what period of time the election cycle covers, in order to determine when a committee has exceeded the $10,000.00 threshold. This depends on the term of office for the candidate, and when the last general election was held for the office that the candidate is running for.

For example: a candidate is running for Mayor. The term of office is four years, and the last General Election was in 2015.

The election cycle started on 01/01/16, and will end on 12/31/19.

Election Cycles

Term of Office	Last Election	Election Cycle Period
4 years	2013	01/01/14 to 12/31/17
4 years	2014	01/01/15 to 12/31/18
4 years	2015	01/01/16 to 12/31/19
4 years	2016	01/01/17 to 12/31/20
2 years	2013	01/01/14 to 12/31/15
2 years	2014	01/01/15 to 12/31/16
2 years	2015	01/01/16 to 12/31/17
2 years	2016	01/01/17 to 12/31/18

Once a committee has exceeded the $10,000.00 threshold they should be advised of the mandatory requirement to file reports electronically. They do not need to electronically file reports that were filed prior to exceeding $10,000.00; however, if they want to voluntarily send data files for reports already received we will certainly accept and process these.

How does a committee start to file electronically?

A committee can certainly file electronic reports voluntarily. We would encourage any committee that believes they will raise in excess of $10,000.00 to start using filing software from the beginning of the campaign, however this is NOT required. While it is not required, it certainly makes using the software much easier than starting to use it in the middle of a cycle.

If a committee starts using the software in the middle of a cycle they will need to manage sum to date totals for transactions prior to software use. They will also need to manually record the beginning balance on the first report. These items are covered in the software manual, available here:

http://ncsbe2.azurewebsites.net/Portals/0/CF/CFRS%20Manual%20-%20Municipal.pdf

The committee should download the software from the SBE website, under Campaign Finance – Reporting Software. Instructions for setting up the software, entering transactions, and creating reports can be found in the manual linked above.

If you do not feel comfortable answering software related questions you can refer your treasurers to us. Please have them email campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov.

How are the reports received and processed?

Effective 01/01/17, these electronic reports are considered the official filing of a committee, and so need to be made available to the public. It is not enough to provide a pdf to the public any more, they must have access to the data file. As CBEs do not have in-house software to manage this process, the reports will be sent to the SBE and made available on our website.

An electronic report is emailed to us at campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov. The report is them imported into our in-house software.

Once the report has been imported it needs to be linked to a committee so that it will be available on our website. In order to set up a committee in our in-house software, we need committee information from CBEs. You should send a Statement of Organization for any committee that you believe will be a mandatory electronic filer. We will then use this information to set the committee up, and link the reports to.

NOTE: When sending a Statement of Organization PLEASE DO NOT send any other forms as they are not needed for this process.

Once a committee has been set up in our software we will send a document to the specific county with links to that committee's information on our website. We will continue to update and send the same document when more committees are received. These links should be provided on the CBE website, so that the public can access them.

How will the CBE know when one of their candidates has filed electronically?

When an electronic report is received from a County or Municipal Committee we will email the county to advise the report that was received, and the received date. If the Committee has not been set up in our database, we will request the Statement of Organization at that time. We would appreciate you sending any requested Statements of Organization as soon as possible after the request, as nothing further is done with the report until this information is received.

Why is the SBE not sending pdfs of reports anymore?

The process for electronic reports used to include sending a pdf of the report to the CBE. We will no longer be providing these pdfs as the data will be available on our website. In addition, due to the expected volume of electronic filers, we will not have time to produce a pdf for each county or municipal report.

What is the CBE responsibility, with regard to their committees who exceed $10,000?

If a manual report is received that causes the committee to exceed $10,000.00, a contact must be made to the committee to advise that their report shows in excess of $10,000.00 for the election cycle, and that they should commence filing electronically. They will need to provide a data file for the report that caused them to exceed the $10,000.00 threshold.

The CBE must be responsible for this process, as the SBE does not have access to the reports filed manually with the county.

Late and Noncompliant Filers

If an electronic filer files a report late, or is noncompliant with a report, the CBE is still responsible for certifying this to SBE. We will advise when the report was received, but you still should complete the certification and email this to nadine.lewis@ncsbe.gov or campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov.

How can I audit without a report?

The data file is available on our website. You can export this data to an excel spreadsheet and use this to run through all of your audit checks. Data can be sorted in any way you want in excel.

We will be providing more information at a later date, with regard to auditing using the data.

The questions on the following two pages were provided with the earlier information for candidate filing.

Mandatory Electronic Filing for Certain Committees

Frequently Asked Questions – County Edition

Q1. Why was my committee not required to file electronically in the last election?

The change to the law regarding electronic filing was effective January 1, 2017.

Q2. I am expecting to have very little activity for my election. Do I still need to file my reports electronically?

Any committee that raises or spends in excess of $10,000.00 in an election cycle will be a mandatory electronic filer. Any committee that does not exceed the $10,000.00 limit will not be expected to file their reports electronically, but can certainly file them voluntarily.

Q3. What are the benefits of filing electronically?

The software performs all of the calculations for you thereby making your reports more accurate and less time consuming for the user. In addition, the software maintains a database of all contributors and payees which also saves time by eliminating the need to enter repetitive information.

Q4. How do I obtain the reporting software?

The Campaign Finance Remote Software (CFRS) is available on the State Board of Elections website at www.ncsbe.gov. Select Campaign Finance, then select Reporting Software. The software is available for download. There are also Campaign Finance Software help topics that will get you started.

Q5. I have a really old pc (dial-up, tablet, Mac), will this software work on my devise?

The Reporting software is a stand-alone application built for the Windows operating system; there is no support for setting up the application to run over a network. Only the following Windows operating platforms are supported:

- Windows XP SP3
- Windows 7 32bit

Q6. When is the best time to start using the software?

You can start at any time but It's easier to start at the beginning of an election cycle so that your election totals are correct.

Q7. Is there a form that I need to file with the BOE indicating that I am planning to exceed $10,000?

No, once a committee exceeds $10,000 they are expected to start using the software and filing future reports electronically.

Q8. Can I create a pdf file and email that in as my electronic filing?

No. A pdf is not the correct format for electronic filing. Your electronically filed report must be imported into the State Board of Elections internal software, and so we need a data file.

Q9. Why am I emailing my electronic reports to the State? I am a municipal/county candidate.

Currently we do not have internal software that the County Boards of Election can use, and so they are unable to accept and process electronic reports. All electronic reports will be made available on the SBE website, and the county boards will provide a link to each committee on their website.

Q10. How can I determine that my electronic report was received?

A reply email is sent for each report that is filed electronically. In addition, starting with the 2017 Mid Year Semi Annual Report, all electronic reports will be available on the State Board of Elections website. The website is updated each evening with all reports that have been imported for the day. You can search for your report by selecting Campaign Finance – Report Search.

Q11. I heard that the state was working on web based software. Is that available?

We do not anticipate the new software being available until early 2018.

Q12. Do I still need to file a signed cover page manually if I have filed an electronic report?

Yes. The law requires that reports are filed under an original signature, so you must file a signed Disclosure Report Cover with your County Board of Elections.

Q13. We are planning to have three very large fundraisers. Will I be able to assist my treasurer with data entry duties using this software?

Unfortunately, the software is a stand-alone application which cannot easily be shared between users. Downloading the software to a laptop which can be shared between users is what we would recommend**.**

Q14. What happens if a committee exceeds $10,000.00 and doesn't file their reports electronically?

Hardcopy reports reflecting that a committee has exceeded the $10,000.00 limit will be processed as "report not received" until that report is properly filed electronically. Reports filed late or not received are assessed daily penalties.

Q15. If I want to receive training for the software, how do I register my interest?

Software training is provided at the State Board of Elections office, on a one to one basis. If enough interest is generated, we may be able to offer software training workshops. There are currently no plans to offer regional software training.

Register your interest in software training by emailing campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov. You can also use this email address if you have any related questions.

Q16. If I have questions about how to use the software, who should I ask?

You should call or email your questions to NCSBOE at 919-733-7173 or campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov.