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*The information in this article is based on a summary of legal principles. It is not to be construed as legal advice. Individuals should consult with legal counsel before taking any action based on these principles to ensure their applicability in a given situation.*

## Campaign contribution limits for local candidates in Wisconsin

The 2017 Wisconsin spring primary will be held on Feb. 21 and the spring election on April 4. Judges, school board members and municipal and non-partisan county officers are elected in the spring election. For information about specific offices or candidates to appear on the spring ballot in a particular community, contact the local clerk or election commission.

All state and local candidates in Wisconsin must abide by source restrictions and contribution limits, in addition to registration, reporting and other regulatory requirements. Corporations, cooperatives, labor organizations, federally-recognized Indian tribes and independent expenditure committees may not contribute to candidates. A political party may make unlimited contributions to candidates for state or local office, but contributions from individuals (which includes sole proprietorships, partnerships and some limited liability companies), candidate committees and political actions committees (PACs) are limited. Contributions include in-kind contributions i.e., personal property or services provided to a candidate committee at no charge or at a discounted rate.

Contribution limits were increased in 2016 when the state legislature rewrote Wisconsin's campaign finance law. Limits for candidates for state office, district attorney and circuit court judge are set in statute while limits for all other local offices are calculated using a statutory formula. For those local offices, the limits are calculated as follows:

- **Contributions from individuals and candidate committees:**  
2¢ multiplied by the population of the municipality, county or district or \$500, whichever is greater. However, the limit is capped at \$6,000.
- **Contributions from PACs:**  
2¢ multiplied by the population of the municipality, county or district or \$400, whichever is greater. However, the limit is capped at \$5,000.

The applicable limit applies during the term of office, which may be either a two or four-year term. For a candidate running for re-election, the term begins on the day he or she took office and ends on the day before the next term begins. For a candidate who does not hold elective office, the term begins on the day he or she becomes a candidate and ends on the day before the term begins for the office he or she is seeking. In general, an individual becomes a candidate when he or she files nomination papers, receives contributions or makes expenditures to further his or her candidacy or is nominated by a caucus or political party.

Following are the current contribution limits for candidates for local office in the cities of Madison and Milwaukee and in Dane and Milwaukee counties.

<b>City of Madison</b>			
<b>Office</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Candidate Committee</b>	<b>PAC</b>
Alder	\$500	\$500	\$400
Municipal Judge	\$4,664	\$4,664	\$4,664
Mayor	\$4,664	\$4,664	\$4,664
MMSD School Board	\$4,526	\$4,526	\$4,526

<b>City of Milwaukee</b>			
<b>Office</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Candidate Committee</b>	<b>PAC</b>
City-wide Offices	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$5,000
Alder District 1	\$770	\$770	\$770
Alder District 2	\$834	\$834	\$834
Alder District 3	\$790	\$790	\$790
Alder District 4	\$772	\$772	\$772
Alder District 5	\$779	\$779	\$779
Alder District 6	\$790	\$790	\$790
Alder District 7	\$801	\$801	\$801
Alder District 8	\$792	\$792	\$792
Alder District 9	\$775	\$775	\$775
Alder District 10	\$789	\$789	\$789
Alder District 11	\$816	\$816	\$816
Alder District 12	\$826	\$826	\$826
Alder District 13	\$794	\$794	\$794
Alder District 14	\$787	\$787	\$787
Alder District 15	\$782	\$782	\$782
School Board District 1	\$1,461	\$1,461	\$1,461
School Board District 2	\$1,481	\$1,481	\$1,481
School Board District 3	\$1,460	\$1,460	\$1,460
School Board District 4	\$1,461	\$1,461	\$1,461
School Board District 5	\$1,599	\$1,599	\$1,599
School Board District 6	\$1,404	\$1,404	\$1,404
School Board District 7	\$1,484	\$1,484	\$1,484
School Board District 8	\$1,482	\$1,482	\$1,482

<b>Dane County</b>			
<b>Office</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Candidate Committee</b>	<b>PAC</b>
County Supervisor	\$500	\$500	\$400
County Executive & Constitutional Officers	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$5,000
Circuit Court Judge	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
District Attorney	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000

<b>Milwaukee County</b>			
<b>Office</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Candidate Committee</b>	<b>PAC</b>
County Executive, County Comptroller & Constitutional Officers	\$6,000	\$5,000*	\$5,000
Circuit Court Judge	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
District Attorney	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
County Supervisor District 1	\$1,038.82	\$1,038.82	\$1,038.82
County Supervisor District 2	\$1,047.90	\$1,047.90	\$1,047.90
County Supervisor District 3	\$1,055.34	\$1,055.34	\$1,055.34
County Supervisor District 4	\$1,059.90	\$1,059.90	\$1,059.90
County Supervisor District 5	\$1,048.68	\$1,048.68	\$1,048.68
County Supervisor District 6	\$1,045.74	\$1,045.74	\$1,045.74
County Supervisor District 7	\$1,031.78	\$1,031.78	\$1,031.78
County Supervisor District 8	\$1,050.56	\$1,050.56	\$1,050.56
County Supervisor District 9	\$1,087.78	\$1,087.78	\$1,087.78
County Supervisor District 10	\$1,050.42	\$1,050.42	\$1,050.42
County Supervisor District 11	\$1,078.28	\$1,078.28	\$1,078.28
County Supervisor District 12	\$1,015.50	\$1,015.50	\$1,015.50
County Supervisor District 13	\$1,029.70	\$1,029.70	\$1,029.70
County Supervisor District 14	\$1,052.22	\$1,052.22	\$1,052.22
County Supervisor District 15	\$1,069.10	\$1,069.10	\$1,069.10
County Supervisor District 16	\$1,073.74	\$1,073.74	\$1,073.74
County Supervisor District 17	\$1,073.90	\$1,073.90	\$1,073.90
County Supervisor District 18	\$1,045.26	\$1,045.26	\$1,045.26

\*The Milwaukee County Election Commission website indicates that the limit on contributions from candidate committees is \$5,000. This is in conflict state statutes which place the cap at \$6,000. Nonetheless, a candidate committee should consult the Election Commission before accepting a contribution from a candidate committee in excess of \$5,000.