



Campaign Finance Reform Blast #9 January 2016

Montana & Colorado Report Campaign Contributions Online

Montana Brings Information Online January 2016

Starting in January of this year searchable campaign contribution reports are available to Montana residents immediately after publication. Visit their online reporting site at: [<http://politicalpractices.mt.gov/default.mcpix>]. Voters in Montana are now able to know, before they vote, who has reported spending and how much they have spent to influence votes. Another change is that non-statewide candidates are also required to file reports.

The Montana Commissioner of Political Practices, Jonathan Motl, said "We're in a new era of transparency in Montana, and this reporting period demonstrated that era." Last year, a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers in Montana banned dark money spending in elections.

According to *Issue One*, a bipartisan community dedicated to reducing the influence of money in politics and putting everyday Americans back in control of our democracy: "While transparency reforms would play a considerable role in solving this problem, it alone cannot fix the system. Additional reforms, such as citizen-funding of elections and a strong accountability system to hold people accountable for breaking these rules, are critical to any effective campaign finance reform agenda."

Colorado Has Detailed Information Online: TRACER



<http://tracer.sos.colorado.gov/PublicSite/homepage.aspx>



TRACER (**T**ransparency in **C**ontribution and **E**xpenditure **R**eporting) is the Colorado Secretary of State's online campaign finance filing system. It was launched on January 4, 2010. TRACER contains campaign finance data for all state and county candidates, committees, and political parties in Colorado dating back to 2002. It is the system by which candidates, committees, and political parties enter their reports of contributions and expenditures. You can search the system in several ways and review the results online, print them or extract them for further analysis.

The Colorado Secretary of State's Office set up the system in response to the growing number of committees required to report contributions and expenditures, to increase the efficiency of data entry, provide more accurate data, enhance reporting capabilities and improve user navigation of the system.

A remaining issue is how quickly disclosures are made. Too often, donations are only reported after an election has taken place. According to the State of Colorado Campaign Finance Manual:

Candidates and candidate committees typically file on a "frequent" schedule during the election year, and an "infrequent" schedule during non-election years. "Election year" means the year in which the office appears on the ballot.

[<https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/CampaignFinance/files/CPFManual.pdf>]

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