

IOWA ETHICS AND CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE BOARD

An Independent Agency of the Executive Branch

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BOARD MEMBERS:
James Albert, Chair
John Walsh, Vice Chair
Saima Zafar
Carole Tillotson
Jonathan Roos
Mary Rueter

To: Administration and Regulation Appropriations Committee
From: Megan Tooker
Date: February 12, 2013
Re: Fiscal Year 2014

1. About the Ethics Board

The Board is an independent agency of the Executive Branch. Its mission is to foster the public trust and confidence in government by ensuring the integrity of political campaigns, the ethical standards of public official and employees of the Executive Branch, and the oversight of Executive Branch lobbyists. The Board enforces the provisions of the "Campaign Disclosure-Income Tax Checkoff Act" in Iowa Code chapter 68A, the "Government Ethics and Lobbying Act" in chapter 68B, the reporting of gifts and bequests received by state agencies under section 8.7, and the Board's administrative rules in Chapter 351 of the Iowa Administrative Code.

2. The Board has 4 main areas of responsibility

- a. Ensuring compliance of Iowa's campaign finance laws
 - i. \$ 1.5 million spent on independent expenditures in 2012
 - ii. Currently 1500 open committees registered with the Board (750 local committees; 200 central committees; 250 statewide PACs and 320 legislative committees)
- b. Ensuring Executive Branch officials and employees comply with ethics laws
 - i. Investigate complaints
 - ii. Educate officials and employees
 - iii. Provide informal and formal advice
- c. Accept agency gift law reports
- d. Provide informal and formal advice to county and city officials and employees on ethics laws
 - i. Board has no enforcement authority at the local level
 - ii. County attorneys responsible for investigating and enforcement

3. Budget request for FY2014

The Board requests a minimum of \$490,000 for FY2014. This amount is the same as the Board's appropriation for FY2013 and substantially less than the \$537,000 that was appropriated for FY2011. Since FY2011, three Board employees took SERIP and the Board's staff was reduced from 6 positions to 5.

4. Trends and items of interest

- a. Independent expenditures – becoming more prevalent in candidate races
- b. Electronic filing of reports
 - i. Most committees are now required to file electronically
 - ii. Board staff strongly encouraging voluntary e-filing by committees still allowed to paper file

5. Legislative priorities

- a. More transparency for independent expenditure reporting (see SSB1114 and HSB113)
- b. Streamlining Board's complaint procedures to allow complaints to be processed more quickly (see SSB1013 and HSB20)
- c. Requiring Executive Branch gift law reporting by officials and employees of gifts in excess of \$100 from restricted donors (see SF121 and HSB19)

6. Other projects/goals

- a. Campaign finance outreach (webinars, candidate schools, manuals)
- b. Personal financial disclosure reports – upgrading reporting system to produce more complete and comprehensive reports
- c. Continual improvements to web reporting system to make more user friendly