# FAST FACTS

*On National Campaign Finance Reform*

**1867**
The first federal campaign finance legislation prohibited Federal officers from requesting contributions from Navy Yard workers.

**1883**
Civil Service Reform Act extended the above rule to all federal civil service workers.

**1907**
Congress passed the Tillman Act, which prohibited corporations and national banks from contributing money to Federal campaigns.

**1910**
The first Federal campaign disclosure legislation passed, affecting House elections only. In 1911, the law was amended to cover Senate elections as well, and to set spending limits for all Congressional candidates.

**1925**
The Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925, which affected general election activity only, strengthened disclosure requirements and increased expenditure limits.

**1939**
The Hatch Act and its 1940 amendments asserted the right of Congress to regulate primary elections and included provisions limiting contributions and expenditures in Congressional elections.

**1947**
The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 barred both labor unions and corporations from making expenditures and contributions in Federal elections.

**1971**
Congress passed the more stringent disclosure provision with the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). In 1968, still under the old law, House and Senate candidates reported spending $8.5 million, while in 1972, after the passage of the FECA, spending reported by Congressional candidates jumped to $88.9 million.

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-225), together with the 1971 Revenue Act (P.L. 92-178), initiated fundamental changes in Federal campaign finance laws. FECA required full reporting of campaign contributions and expenditures, and limited spending on media advertisements. (These limits were later repealed.)

The FECA also provided the basic legislative framework for separate segregated funds, popularly referred to as PACs (political action committees). FECA provided an exception allowing corporations and unions to use treasury funds to establish, operate and solicit voluntary contributions for the organization's separate segregated fund (i.e., PAC) for Federal races.

**1971**
Revenue Act - citizens could check a box on their tax forms authorizing the Federal government to use one of their tax dollars to finance Presidential campaigns in the general election. Congress implemented the program in 1973 and, by 1976, enough tax money had accumulated to fund the 1976 election-the first publicly funded Federal election in U.S. history.

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FECA did not provide a monitoring body to enforce the law, more than 7000 cases were referred to the Justice Department, however few were litigated.

**1974**
Following the documentation of campaign abuses in the 1972 Presidential elections, a consensus emerged to create an independent body to ensure compliance with the campaign finance laws.

The Federal Election Commission was established as an independent agency to assume the administrative functions previously divided between Congressional officers and the General Accounting Office (GAO). The Commission was given jurisdiction in civil enforcement matters, authority to write regulations and responsibility for monitoring compliance with the FECA. The President and Congress appoint the six voting Commissioners.

Buckley v. Valeo
Restrictions in FECA (as amended in 1974) were challenged as unconstitutional violations of free speech. Supreme Court upheld disclosure requirements, limits on individual contributions, and voluntary public financing, and affirmed President's authority to appoint all six FEC commissioners. The Court struck down, as infringement on free speech, limits on candidate expenditure (unless candidate accepts public financing), limits on contributions by candidates and their families to their own campaigns, and limits on "independent expenditure" (election spending not coordinated with candidates or their committees.)

**1976**
In response to the Supreme Court's decision, Congress revised campaign finance legislation yet again. The new amendments, enacted on May 11, 1976, repealed expenditure limits (except for candidates who accepted public funding) and revised the provision governing the appointment of Commissioners.

Amendments limited the scope of PAC fundraising by corporations and labor organizations. A single contribution limit was adopted for all PACs established by the same union or corporation.

**1979**
The 1979 amendments to FECA included provisions that simplified reporting requirements, encouraged party activity at State and local levels and increased the public funding grants for Presidential nominating conventions. Minor amendments were adopted in 1977, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

*Adapted from www.fec.org and www.opensecrets.org*