

MEDIA MENTION

Michael Toner Discusses Big Money and Politics

CBS News

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Wiley Rein Election Law & Government Ethics Practice co-chair

Michael Toner was interviewed by CBS News on how the federal campaign finance system works.

CBS News reported that "under federal law, an individual can give up to \$2,500 to a candidate or candidate committee per election (primary and general election contests are treated as separate elections) and up to \$30,800 to a party committee per year. That may seem like a lot, but it's relative pocket change in an era in which more than \$2 billion is expected to be spent on the presidential election." Making the process more complicated is the fact that donors who would rather keep their contributions shielded from public view can donate to nonprofit groups organized under section 501(c) of the tax code, though politics cannot be their "primary purpose."

Mr. Toner, a former chairman of the Federal Election Commission, told CBS that "the IRS has been less than crystal clear on how to apply the primary purpose test" when it comes to these groups. He added that the law has generally been interpreted to mean "social welfare" groups have to spend less than 50 percent of their expenditures on electoral activities. Typically the remaining money is spent on education, lobbying and other activities not directly tied to electing candidates.

Related Professionals

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Practice Areas

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