

Arizona, Florida and Maryland Increase Contribution Limits, Revise Other Campaign Finance Laws

May 2013

Arizona

On April 11, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law a bill raising the state's campaign contribution limits. The limits for individuals and non-certified political committees have increased to \$2,500 per election when giving to a candidate for legislative office or statewide office; until now, the limits on contributions to a legislative or statewide candidate were \$488 and \$1,010 respectively. Moreover, this newly passed legislation allows individuals and committees to give twice, with a separate limit for the primary and general elections. (Previously, an individual could only give once for the primary and general elections.) Certified political committees also were given the ability to make certain additional contributions over the course of an election cycle. According to press reports, Senator J.D. Mesnard (R-Chandler), the chief sponsor of the bill, said that the increased limits were needed to "allow candidates to collect higher amounts from donors, whether they be individuals or committees, to keep pace with the independent-expenditure committees," *i.e.*, Super PACs.

Florida

On May 1, Governor Rick Scott of Florida signed into law a bill that makes several significant changes to the state's campaign finance laws. Beginning November 1, 2013, the contribution limits to candidates will be raised from \$500 per election to \$3,000 per election for statewide candidates and \$1,000 per election for legislative and local candidates. Also, effective September 30, 2013,

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the special campaign finance entities known as “committees of continuous existence” will cease to exist.

Maryland

On May 2, Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley signed into law a major campaign finance overhaul that increases individual contribution limits and adds new disclosure requirements. Starting in 2015, individual contribution limits will jump from \$4,000 to \$6,000 and the total contribution limit for a four-year election cycle will increase from \$10,000 to \$24,000. While individual contributions will increase, loopholes that previously allowed individuals to contribute multiple times using limited liability companies will be closed. Another provision of the law affects disclosure by those who have contracts with state government.

The Maryland law also addresses new issues prompted by the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United*. Super PACs now have to report to the Maryland State Board of Elections within 48 hours of spending \$10,000 on campaign materials. Another provision included in the law would require 501(c)(4)s and 527s to disclose their top five contributors. The Maryland State Board of Elections will, for the first time, be given the power to assess civil citations for strict liability offenses. The maximum citation of \$500 can be assessed for failing to maintain a bank account or not keeping accurate accounting books and records.