

Vermont's Contribution Limits Revert to Old Levels after *Randall v. Sorrell*

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In June 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Vermont's Act 64 contribution limits and candidate spending limits as unconstitutionally restrictive in the case of *Randall v. Sorrell*. Justice Stephen G. Breyer stated in a plurality opinion that Vermont's exceptionally low contribution limits infringed on First Amendment rights because they were not "closely drawn" to the state's policy goals. The Court also held that Vermont's campaign spending limits were unconstitutional restrictions on candidates' First Amendment free speech guarantees.

After the ruling, the contribution limits that existed prior to the enactment of Act 64 came back into effect, according to the secretary of state. Because the spending limit provisions of Act 64 were never put into effect, this part of the ruling does not require changes for candidates or campaigns. In addition, all provisions of Vermont's campaign finance law that were not declared unconstitutional remain in effect.

Under the current contribution limits, individuals and entities that are not parties or political committees may contribute up to \$1,000 per election to candidates or candidate committees. Political committees may contribute up to \$3,000 per election to candidates or candidate committees. Political parties may make unlimited contributions to candidates or candidate committees. The \$2,000 per cycle limit on contributions from individuals or entities to political action committees and political parties was not addressed by the Supreme Court and remains in effect.

The new contribution limits are posted on the Vermont secretary of state's website and included in the campaign finance guide published by the Office of the Vermont Secretary of State.

Authors

Andrew G. Woodson
Partner
202.719.4638
awoodson@wiley.law