

Campaign Finance Policy and Campaign Security

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Federal campaign finance law does not specifically address the permissibility of spending funds for campaign security, but [Federal Election Commission](#) (FEC) rules issued in 2024 do ([11 C.F.R. §113.1\(g\)\(10\)](#)). This CRS Insight provides a brief overview of those rules (also called “regulations”) and related topics. It is not intended to be a legal analysis and does not address specific compliance, enforcement, or security scenarios. Additional resources for congressional readers appear at the end of this Insight.

Campaign Finance Policy and Security Expenses

The [Federal Election Campaign Act](#) (FECA) is the nation’s primary campaign finance statute. FECA does not specifically address security issues. FECA does, however, affect a campaign’s ability to raise money, and to spend those funds on security or on other items. Purchasing anything, whether for security purposes or other purposes, requires compliance with FECA, such as accepting contributions only from permissible sources and in limited amounts.

A FECA prohibition on “personal use” of campaign funds is particularly noteworthy for understanding the recently promulgated FEC regulations on security spending. As discussed in [another CRS product](#), FECA prohibits ([52 U.S.C. §30114\(b\)](#)) spending campaign funds on items that would normally be personal expenditures rather than campaign ones. These prohibited expenditures include, for example, payments for housing, clothing, or tuition. Until 2024, FEC regulations implementing these provisions did not address spending for security purposes, although the agency had issued several [advisory opinions](#) (AOs) on the subject. AOs are not equivalent to regulations, but FECA permits regulated entities operating in similar circumstances to those described in AOs to rely on them for guidance. On September 19, 2024, the FEC [approved regulations](#) concerning using campaign funds to pay for certain security expenses. The new rules, which largely codify previous AOs, became effective on January 1, 2025. The regulations affect spending by federal campaigns, not state or local ones.

The 2024 FEC regulations specify that certain security expenditures do not constitute personal use, and therefore are not prohibited under commission regulations. They permit spending campaign funds “to pay for the reasonable costs of security measures for a federal candidate, federal officeholder, member of their family, and employees ... of the candidate’s campaign or the federal officeholder’s office.” At least two

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criteria may be particularly noteworthy. First, the security expense must be made to “address ongoing dangers or threats that would not exist irrespective of the individual’s status or duties as a federal candidate or officeholder.” Second, the campaign must pay the “usual and normal charge” for security goods or services. Under the regulations, “usual and normal” means “the price of those goods in the market in which they are ordinarily purchased, and, in the case of services, the hourly or piecework charge for the services at a commercially reasonable rate prevailing at the time the services were rendered” (11 C.F.R. §113.1(g)(10)).

The rules also include examples, which are not exhaustive, of permissible security expenses. These include “[n]on-structural security devices,” such as locks and security systems; “structural security devices,” such as gates and doors; security personnel; and cybersecurity “software, devices, and services.” Here, too, the rules specify additional caveats. For example, structural devices must be “intended solely to provide security and not to improve the [candidate’s] property or increase its value.” In addition, security personnel must be “bona fide, legitimate, and professional.” In the explanation and justification (E&J) statement [accompanying the published rules](#), the commission noted that these and other conditions were similar to those contained in AOs on security issues that the FEC had issued previously.

No Appropriated Funds Currently Provided Directly for Campaign Security

Political campaigns do not normally receive appropriated federal funds for security or for other services. They might, however, benefit from services that federal agencies provide, such as Secret Service protection for presidential candidates, or cybersecurity or physical security consultations that agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) provide.

Publicly financed presidential campaigns—an increasingly rare phenomenon since at least the 2012 election cycle—could use payments from the [Presidential Election Campaign Fund](#) (PECF) to pay for security or for other permissible campaign purposes. Through the PECF, taxpayers may designate \$3 (or \$6 for married couples filing jointly) from their individual income tax returns to support presidential campaigns that choose to accept public funds in exchange for observing spending limits, among other requirements. Because taxpayers choose or decline to make PECF designations, these amounts are not considered to be appropriated funds.

Between the 1976 and 2012 election cycles, PECF designations provided certain financial support, including potentially for security, to national-convention committees (e.g., those responsible for the Democratic National Convention or the Republican National Convention) that chose to accept the funds. Congress repealed the convention-funding portion of the PECF in 2014 via [P.L. 113-94](#). Since that time, presidential nominating convention operations have been entirely privately financed. [Another CRS product](#) discusses convention security, including other federal funding sources.

Other Potential Considerations for Congress

This Insight discusses only campaign finance policy aspects of campaign security. Members of Congress have separate record-keeping and ethics obligations under chamber rules (such as [House Rule 23](#) or [Senate Rule 38](#)). The Committee on House Administration, House Ethics Committee, Senate Rules and Administration Committee, and Senate Select Committee on Ethics can provide guidance on whether using campaign funds for security expenses could implicate chamber rules. Similarly, this Insight does not address security assistance or funding available from the U.S. Capitol Police, the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms, or through Member office budgets (the [House Members’ Representational Allowance](#) and the [Senators’ Official Personnel and Office Expense Account](#)).

Selected CRS Products for Additional Reading

CRS Report R46878, *Permissible and Prohibited Uses of Campaign Funds: Frequently Asked Questions and Policy Overview*, by R. Sam Garrett

CRS Report R41542, *The State of Campaign Finance Policy: Recent Developments and Issues for Congress*, by R. Sam Garrett

CRS Report R45320, *Campaign Finance Law: An Analysis of Key Issues, Recent Developments, and Constitutional Considerations for Legislation*, by L. Paige Whitaker

CRS Report R46521, *Political Campaign Contributions and Congress: A Legal Primer*, by L. Paige Whitaker

CRS In Focus IF11555, *Presidential Candidate and Nominating Convention Security*, by Shawn Reese

CRS Report R47731, *Who Protects Whom? Federal Official and Judicial Security and Personal Protective Details*, by Shawn Reese

CRS Report R41609, *Violence Against Members of Congress and Their Staff: Selected Examples and Congressional Responses*, by R. Eric Petersen and Jennifer E. Manning

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