

# Memorandum



DATE March 28, 2008


TO **Honorable Mayor and  
Members of City Council**

SUBJECT **Electronic Filing of Campaign Finance Reports**

Attached is the following briefing information on electronic filing of campaign finance reports to be presented on April 2, 2008.

- Powerpoint Presentation
- Campaign Finance—  
Electronic Filing System (screen prints)

Please contact me if you have questions.

  
Deborah Watkins  
City Secretary

## Attachments

C: Mary K. Suhm, City Manager  
Thomas P. Perkins Jr., City Attorney  
Rosa A. Rios, Assistant City Secretary  
Rose Ann Jones, Elections Manager

# ELECTRONIC FILING OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTS

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City Secretary's Office  
April 2, 2008

# PURPOSE

This briefing is to inform the City Council of the implementation of electronic filing (e-filing) of campaign finance reports





# E-FILING OBJECTIVE

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Procure and enhance an electronic filing system for campaign finance reports with features to allow quick/efficient access, search and sort capability for candidates, officeholders, political committees and interested citizens

# CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORT FILING REQUIREMENTS

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- Chapter 254 of the Texas Election Code requires:
  - Candidates, officeholders and political committees to report political contributions and expenditures during each reporting period
  - Candidates, officeholders and political committees to file in a format prescribed by Texas Ethics Commission (TEC)
  - Campaign finance reports of candidates, officeholders and specific purpose political committees (SPAC's) to be filed with the City
- Chapter 15A of the Dallas City Code requires general purpose political committees (GPAC's) to file with the City in the same format required for filing with the TEC

# REQUIREMENTS – LOCAL LEVEL E-FILING

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- Section 254.036 of the Texas Election Code requires campaign finance reports to be in a format prescribed by TEC
- TEC allows home-rule cities to pass an ordinance that requires city council candidates, officeholders and political committees to transmit reports electronically rather than on paper, using a system that has been approved by TEC (TEC Advisory Opinion No. 459)
- The City's proposed electronic filing system is modeled using the same standards TEC is required to meet under Section 571.061 of the Texas Government Code
- The City will also make available, upon request, a paper copy of the report that conforms to the same format and paper size as the form prescribed by TEC

# EXEMPTIONS TO ELECTRONIC FILING

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Exemptions to electronic filing are provided as follows:

- The filer
  - (or agent of the filer or a person with whom the filer contracts) does not use computer equipment to keep the current records of political contributions, political expenditures, or persons making political contributions to the filer; and
  - does not, in a calendar year, accept political contributions that in the aggregate exceed \$20,000 or make political expenditures that in the aggregate exceed \$20,000; or
- The filer is an individual not acting in concert with another person who makes one or more direct campaign expenditures in an election from the individual's own property that exceed \$100 on any one or more candidates or measures if the individual complies with Chapter 254 of the Texas Election Code as if the individual were a campaign treasurer of a political committee and the individual receives no reimbursement for the expenditures

# MAJOR TEXAS CITIES - COMPARISON OF CURRENT REPORTING SYSTEMS

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City with custom system providing for on-line preparation and submission with the ability to search for specific information:

San Antonio

City with custom system providing for on-line preparation and submission with limited search capability in PDF format:

Houston

Cities with basic methods for filing paper copy with limited search capability in PDF format:

Dallas  
Austin  
Fort Worth



# IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

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- March 2006 - City Secretary's Office began researching e-filing
- March 2008 - E-filing software purchased
- April 2, 2008 - Council Briefing
- April 4, 2008 - TEC Advisory Committee meeting to consider Dallas' e-filing system
- April 23, 2008 - Council consideration of amending Chapter 15A to require e-filing
- June 1, 2008 - System ready for testing
- June 15, 2008 - Begin training candidates, officeholders, political committees and interested citizens
- July 15, 2008 - Semi-annual campaign finance reports due
- Jan. 15, 2009 - Electronic filing of semi-annual campaign finance reports due will be enforced

# E-FILING TRAINING

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- City Secretary's Office and Communication and Information Services will train candidates, officeholders, political committees and interested citizens to use the system
- Public Information Office will assist in developing a training video
- City Secretary's Office and Communication and Information Services will staff "help desk" to answer questions from users

# SUMMARY

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Dallas will become one of the leading cities in Texas to initiate electronic filing of campaign finance reports for candidates, officeholders and political committees

