



Ohio Revised Code

Section 3517.01 Political party definitions.

Effective: September 30, 2025

Legislation: House Bill 96

(A)(1) A political party within the meaning of Title XXXV of the Revised Code is any group of voters that meets either of the following requirements:

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this division, at the most recent regular state election, the group polled for its candidate for governor in the state or nominees for presidential electors at least three per cent of the entire vote cast for that office. A group that meets the requirements of this division remains a political party for a period of four years after meeting those requirements.

(b) The group filed with the secretary of state, subsequent to its failure to meet the requirements of division (A)(1)(a) of this section, a party formation petition that meets all of the following requirements:

(i) The petition is signed by qualified electors equal in number to at least one per cent of the total vote for governor or nominees for presidential electors at the most recent election for such office.

(ii) The petition is signed by not fewer than five hundred qualified electors from each of at least a minimum of one-half of the congressional districts in this state. If an odd number of congressional districts exists in this state, the number of districts that results from dividing the number of congressional districts by two shall be rounded up to the next whole number.

(iii) The petition declares the petitioners' intention of organizing a political party, the name of which shall be stated in the declaration, and of participating in the succeeding general election, held in even-numbered years, that occurs more than one hundred twenty-five days after the date of filing.

(iv) The petition designates a committee of not less than three nor more than five individuals of the petitioners, who shall represent the petitioners in all matters relating to the petition. Notice of all matters or proceedings pertaining to the petition may be served on the committee, or any of them, either personally or by registered mail, or by leaving such notice at the usual place of residence of



each of them.

(2) No such group of electors shall assume a name or designation that is similar, in the opinion of the secretary of state, to that of an existing political party as to confuse or mislead the voters at an election.

(B) A campaign committee shall be legally liable for any debts, contracts, or expenditures incurred or executed in its name.

(C) Notwithstanding the definitions found in section 3501.01 of the Revised Code, as used in this section and sections 3517.08 to 3517.991 of the Revised Code:

(1) "Campaign committee" means a candidate or a combination of two or more persons authorized by a candidate under section 3517.081 of the Revised Code to receive contributions and make expenditures.

(2) "Campaign treasurer" means an individual appointed by a candidate under section 3517.081 of the Revised Code.

(3) "Candidate" has the same meaning as in division (H) of section 3501.01 of the Revised Code and also includes any person who, at any time before or after an election, receives contributions or makes expenditures or other use of contributions, has given consent for another to receive contributions or make expenditures or other use of contributions, or appoints a campaign treasurer, for the purpose of bringing about the person's nomination or election to public office. When two persons jointly seek the offices of governor and lieutenant governor, "candidate" means the pair of candidates jointly. "Candidate" does not include candidates for election to the offices of member of a county or state central committee, presidential elector, and delegate to a national convention or conference of a political party.

(4) "Continuing association" means an association, other than a campaign committee, political party, legislative campaign fund, political contributing entity, or labor organization, that is intended to be a permanent organization that has a primary purpose other than supporting or opposing specific candidates, political parties, or ballot issues, and that functions on a regular basis throughout the



year. "Continuing association" includes organizations that are determined to be not organized for profit under subsection 501 and that are described in subsection 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), or 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(5) "Contribution" means a loan, gift, deposit, forgiveness of indebtedness, donation, advance, payment, or transfer of funds or anything of value, including a transfer of funds from an inter vivos or testamentary trust or decedent's estate, and the payment by any person other than the person to whom the services are rendered for the personal services of another person, which contribution is made, received, or used for the purpose of influencing the results of an election. Any loan, gift, deposit, forgiveness of indebtedness, donation, advance, payment, or transfer of funds or of anything of value, including a transfer of funds from an inter vivos or testamentary trust or decedent's estate, and the payment by any campaign committee, political action committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, political contributing entity, or person other than the person to whom the services are rendered for the personal services of another person, that is made, received, or used by a state or county political party, other than the moneys an entity may receive under sections 3517.101, 3517.1012, and 3517.1013 of the Revised Code, shall be considered to be a "contribution" for the purpose of section 3517.10 of the Revised Code and shall be included on a statement of contributions filed under that section.

"Contribution" does not include any of the following:

- (a) Services provided without compensation by individuals volunteering a portion or all of their time on behalf of a person;
- (b) Ordinary home hospitality;
- (c) The personal expenses of a volunteer paid for by that volunteer campaign worker;
- (d) Any gift given to an entity pursuant to section 3517.101 of the Revised Code;
- (e) Any contribution as defined in section 3517.1011 of the Revised Code that is made, received, or used to pay the direct costs of producing or airing an electioneering communication;



(f) Any gift given to a state or county political party for the party's restricted fund under division (A)(2) of section 3517.1012 of the Revised Code;

(g) Any gift given to a state political party for deposit in a Levin account pursuant to section 3517.1013 of the Revised Code. As used in this division, "Levin account" has the same meaning as in that section.

(h) Any donation given to a transition fund under section 3517.1014 of the Revised Code.

(6) "Expenditure" means the disbursement or use of a contribution for the purpose of influencing the results of an election or of making a charitable donation under division (G) of section 3517.08 of the Revised Code. Any disbursement or use of a contribution by a state or county political party is an expenditure and shall be considered either to be made for the purpose of influencing the results of an election or to be made as a charitable donation under division (G) of section 3517.08 of the Revised Code and shall be reported on a statement of expenditures filed under section 3517.10 of the Revised Code. During the thirty days preceding a primary or general election, any disbursement to pay the direct costs of producing or airing a broadcast, cable, or satellite communication that refers to a clearly identified candidate shall be considered to be made for the purpose of influencing the results of that election and shall be reported as an expenditure or as an independent expenditure under section 3517.10 or 3517.105 of the Revised Code, as applicable, except that the information required to be reported regarding contributors for those expenditures or independent expenditures shall be the same as the information required to be reported under divisions (D)(1) and (2) of section 3517.1011 of the Revised Code.

As used in this division, "broadcast, cable, or satellite communication" and "refers to a clearly identified candidate" have the same meanings as in section 3517.1011 of the Revised Code.

(7) "Personal expenses" includes, but is not limited to, ordinary expenses for accommodations, clothing, food, personal motor vehicle or airplane, and home telephone.

(8) "Political action committee" means a combination of two or more persons, the primary or major purpose of which is to support or oppose any candidate, political party, or issue, or to influence the result of any election through express advocacy, and that is not a political party, a campaign



committee, a political contributing entity, or a legislative campaign fund. "Political action committee" does not include either of the following:

- (a) A continuing association that makes disbursements for the direct costs of producing or airing electioneering communications and that does not engage in express advocacy;
 - (b) A political club that is formed primarily for social purposes and that consists of one hundred members or less, has officers and periodic meetings, has less than two thousand five hundred dollars in its treasury at all times, and makes an aggregate total contribution of one thousand dollars or less per calendar year.
- (9) "Public office" means any state, county, municipal, township, or district office, except an office of a political party, that is filled by an election and the offices of United States senator and representative.
- (10) "Anything of value" has the same meaning as in section 1.03 of the Revised Code.
- (11) "Beneficiary of a campaign fund" means a candidate, a public official or employee for whose benefit a campaign fund exists, and any other person who has ever been a candidate or public official or employee and for whose benefit a campaign fund exists.
- (12) "Campaign fund" means money or other property, including contributions.
- (13) "Public official or employee" has the same meaning as in section 102.01 of the Revised Code.
- (14) "Caucus" means all of the members of the house of representatives or all of the members of the senate of the general assembly who are members of the same political party.
- (15) "Legislative campaign fund" means a fund that is established as an auxiliary of a state political party and associated with one of the houses of the general assembly.
- (16) "In-kind contribution" means anything of value other than money that is used to influence the results of an election or is transferred to or used in support of or in opposition to a candidate,



campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, political action committee, or political contributing entity and that is made with the consent of, in coordination, cooperation, or consultation with, or at the request or suggestion of the benefited candidate, committee, fund, party, or entity. The financing of the dissemination, distribution, or republication, in whole or part, of any broadcast or of any written, graphic, or other form of campaign materials prepared by the candidate, the candidate's campaign committee, or their authorized agents is an in-kind contribution to the candidate and an expenditure by the candidate.

(17) "Independent expenditure" means an expenditure by a person advocating the election or defeat of an identified candidate or candidates, that is not made with the consent of, in coordination, cooperation, or consultation with, or at the request or suggestion of any candidate or candidates or of the campaign committee or agent of the candidate or candidates. As used in division (C)(17) of this section:

(a) "Person" means an individual, partnership, unincorporated business organization or association, political action committee, political contributing entity, separate segregated fund, association, or other organization or group of persons, but not a labor organization or a corporation unless the labor organization or corporation is a political contributing entity.

(b) "Advocating" means any communication containing a message advocating election or defeat.

(c) "Identified candidate" means that the name of the candidate appears, a photograph or drawing of the candidate appears, or the identity of the candidate is otherwise apparent by unambiguous reference.

(d) "Made in coordination, cooperation, or consultation with, or at the request or suggestion of, any candidate or the campaign committee or agent of the candidate" means made pursuant to any arrangement, coordination, or direction by the candidate, the candidate's campaign committee, or the candidate's agent prior to the publication, distribution, display, or broadcast of the communication. An expenditure is presumed to be so made when it is any of the following:

(i) Based on information about the candidate's plans, projects, or needs provided to the person making the expenditure by the candidate, or by the candidate's campaign committee or agent, with a



view toward having an expenditure made;

(ii) Made by or through any person who is, or has been, authorized to raise or expend funds, who is, or has been, an officer of the candidate's campaign committee, or who is, or has been, receiving any form of compensation or reimbursement from the candidate or the candidate's campaign committee or agent;

(iii) Except as otherwise provided in division (D) of section 3517.105 of the Revised Code, made by a political party in support of a candidate, unless the expenditure is made by a political party to conduct voter registration or voter education efforts.

(e) "Agent" means any person who has actual oral or written authority, either express or implied, to make or to authorize the making of expenditures on behalf of a candidate, or means any person who has been placed in a position with the candidate's campaign committee or organization such that it would reasonably appear that in the ordinary course of campaign-related activities the person may authorize expenditures.

(18) "Labor organization" means a labor union; an employee organization; a federation of labor unions, groups, locals, or other employee organizations; an auxiliary of a labor union, employee organization, or federation of labor unions, groups, locals, or other employee organizations; or any other bona fide organization in which employees participate and that exists for the purpose, in whole or in part, of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment.

(19) "Separate segregated fund" means a separate segregated fund established pursuant to the Federal Election Campaign Act.

(20) "Federal Election Campaign Act" means the "Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971," 86 Stat. 11, 2 U.S.C.A. 431, et seq., as amended.

(21) "Restricted fund" means the fund a state or county political party must establish under division (A)(1) of section 3517.1012 of the Revised Code.



(22) "Electioneering communication" has the same meaning as in section 3517.1011 of the Revised Code.

(23) "Express advocacy" means a communication that contains express words advocating the nomination, election, or defeat of a candidate or that contains express words advocating the adoption or defeat of a question or issue, as determined by a final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction.

(24) "Political committee" has the same meaning as in section 3517.1011 of the Revised Code.

(25) "Political contributing entity" means any entity, including a corporation or labor organization, that may lawfully make contributions and expenditures and that is not an individual or a political action committee, continuing association, campaign committee, political party, legislative campaign fund, designated state campaign committee, or state candidate fund. For purposes of this division, "lawfully" means not prohibited by any section of the Revised Code, or authorized by a final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction.

(26) "Internet identifier of record" has the same meaning as in section 9.312 of the Revised Code.