

MARYLAND

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To: Campaign Treasurers, Chairmen, and Candidates

From: Jared DeMarinis
Director, Candidacy and Campaign Finance Division

Date: September 19, 2005

Subject: Use of Campaign Funds for Charitable Purposes

Generally, campaign funds may not be used for charitable purposes. Maryland law requires campaign funds to be used solely for the purpose of supporting or opposing a candidate, question, or political committee. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that contributors give to campaign committees for one important reason – they want to support the committee’s candidate, question, or political party. When campaign funds are spent for a non-campaign related purpose, it frustrates the intent of the contributor.

However, there are instances when a charitable donation is permissible because it is for a campaign purpose. For example, a candidate may permissibly use campaign funds to attend a charitable event since attending the event increases the candidate’s visibility and allows the candidate to network with potential voters and donors.

In addition, the Attorney General’s office has stated that it is permissible for a campaign committee to make an expenditure that is not for a campaign purpose provided it is isolated in occurrence and is minimal in comparison to what the campaign finance entity raises and expends. As a general rule, a non-campaign related expenditure may not exceed the lesser of 5 percent of the committee’s cash balance or \$4,000.