



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 1763-2019, **Version:** 2

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### BACKGROUND

The purpose of this ordinance is to create new sections 107.02, 107.03, 107.04, and 107.05 of the Columbus City Codes; to update and clarify Code sections pertaining to campaign finance disclosure for officeholders, candidates, ballot issue committees, PACs, PCEs, and other required filers in the City of Columbus.

In the past few years, Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and City Council have proposed and passed reforms that make municipal elections in Columbus more transparent to the public. A recent Supreme Court decision in *Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington v. Federal Election Commission and Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies* opened the door for greater disclosure from the groups paying for election period communications, including dark money. In 2018, Mayor Ginther proposed and Council passed amendments to the City Codes that force disclosure of these forms of political contributions and expenditures, as well as setting contribution limits for municipal candidates and contributors, requiring auditing of campaign finance reports, and creating a system to report and investigate alleged violations.

Upon additional review of these sections, it became clear the further updates were necessary to align with state and federal law, as well as to ensure the maximum disclosure allowable by law. The new sections enacted will also provide additional definitions and reorder some of the previous language in these sections to increase clarity. There are four key areas for updates:

- Definitions added and/or edited, such as expanding the definition of “agent” to include those who would reasonably appear to authorize expenditures on behalf of campaign committees, as well as to expand the amount of time given to file election period communication reports from twenty-four (24) to forty-eight (48) hours
- Updating filing requirements to mirror state and federal laws by requiring independent expenditure entities to disclose all individual donors that contribute equal to or exceeding an aggregated amount of \$200 to the entity
- Raising the dollar limit requirements of those filing election period communication reports - more closely mirroring the requirements of campaign finance reports by changing amount required for filing by individuals who pay for their own communications from \$100 to an aggregated amount of \$1000.
- Revising the penalty and process for these code sections; also adding language indicating that a municipal ballot committee that receives a contribution from an entity that is unable or unwilling to identify donors must properly dispose of the contribution.

This ordinance will further the City’s efforts to enhance disclosure and transparency in its campaign finance laws and minimize the influence of dark money on the City’s elections.

To enact new sections 107.02, 107.03, 107.04, and 107.05 of the Columbus City Codes and to repeal current sections 107.02, 107.03, 107.04, and 107.05 of the Columbus City Codes; to update and clarify Code sections pertaining to campaign finance disclosure for officeholders, candidates, ballot issue committees, PACs, PCEs, and other required filers in the City of Columbus.

**WHEREAS**, the voters of the City of Columbus expanded the City's authority to regulate campaign finance limits and disclosure by a vote of 104,967 yes to 42,484 no on November 4, 2014; and

**WHEREAS**, Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and Columbus City Council previously expanded municipal candidate and ballot issue committee disclosure requirements; and

**WHEREAS**, a recent United States Supreme Court ruling allows the City to require disclosure of "dark money"; and

**WHEREAS**, it is now necessary to create new sections 107.02, 107.03, 107.04, and 107.05 of the Columbus City Codes, and to repeal current sections 107.02, 107.03, 107.04, and 107.05, to provide greater clarity and maximize the disclosure of any dark money spent in City elections; and

**WHEREAS**, this ordinance builds on the Mayor and Council's past work to enhance disclosure and transparency in its campaign finance laws and minimize the influence of dark money on the City's elections, ensuring the health, safety and welfare of Columbus residents; now, therefore

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:**

**SECTION 1.** That new sections 107.02, 107.03, 107.04, and 107.05 of the Columbus City Codes are hereby enacted, reading as follows: **SEE ATTACHMENT**

**SECTION 2.** That existing sections 107.02, 107.03, 107.04, and 107.05 of the Columbus City Codes are hereby repealed and replaced as provided herein.

**SECTION 3.** That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.