

3517.20 Political communications must be identified; penalty

(A)(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Political publication for or against a candidate" means a notice, placard, advertisement, sample ballot, brochure, flyer, direct mailer, or other form of general publication that is designed to promote the nomination, election, or defeat of a candidate.

(b) "Political publication for or against an issue" means a notice, placard, advertisement, sample ballot, brochure, flyer, direct mailer, or other form of general publication that is designed to promote the adoption or defeat of a ballot issue or question or to influence the voters in an election.

(c) "Public political advertising" means newspapers, magazines, outdoor advertising facilities, direct mailings, or other similar types of general public political advertising, or flyers, handbills, or other nonperiodical printed matter.

(d) "Statewide candidate" has the same meaning as in section 3517.102 of the Revised Code.

(e) "Legislative candidate" means a candidate for the office of member of the general assembly.

(f) "Local candidate" means a candidate for an elective office of a political subdivision of this state.

(g) "Legislative campaign fund" has the same meaning as in section 3517.01 of the Revised Code.

(h) "Limited political action committee" means a political action committee of fewer than ten members.

(i) "Designated amount" means one hundred dollars in the case of a local candidate or a local ballot issue, two hundred fifty dollars in the case of a legislative candidate, or five hundred dollars in the case of a statewide candidate or a statewide ballot issue.

(j) "To issue" includes to print, post, distribute, reproduce for distribution, or cause to be issued, printed, posted, distributed, or reproduced for distribution.

(k) "Telephone bank" means more than five hundred telephone calls of an identical or substantially similar nature within any thirty-day period, whether those telephone calls are made by individual callers or by recording.

(2) No candidate, campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, or other entity, except a political action committee, shall issue a form of political publication for or against a candidate, or shall make an expenditure for the purpose of financing political communications in support of or opposition to a candidate through public political advertising, unless the name and residence or business address of the candidate or the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, or other entity that issues or otherwise is responsible for that political publication or that makes an expenditure for that political communication appears in a conspicuous place on that political publication or is contained within that political communication.

(3) No limited political action committee shall do either of the following unless the name and residence or business address of the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the limited political action committee involved appears in a conspicuous place in the political publication for or against a candidate described in division (A)(3)(a) of this section or is contained within the political communication described in division (A)(3)(b) of this section:

(a) Issue a form of political publication for or against a candidate that costs in excess of the designated amount or that is issued in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at the request or suggestion of, a candidate, a campaign committee, a legislative campaign fund, a political party, a political action committee with ten or more members, or a limited political action committee that spends in excess of the designated amount on a related or the same or similar political publication for or against a candidate;

(b) Make an expenditure in excess of the designated amount in support of or opposition to a candidate or make an expenditure in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at the request or suggestion of, a candidate, a campaign committee, a legislative campaign fund, a political party, a political action committee with ten or more members, or a limited political action committee that spends in excess of the designated amount in support of or opposition to the same candidate, for the purpose of financing political communications in support of or opposition to that candidate through public political advertising.

(4) No political action committee with ten or more members shall issue a form of political publication for or against a candidate, or shall make an expenditure for the purpose of financing political communications in support of or opposition to a candidate through public political advertising, unless the name and residence or business address of the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the political action committee that issues or otherwise is responsible for that political publication or that makes an expenditure for that political communication through public political advertising appears in a conspicuous place in that political publication or is contained within that political communication.

(5) No corporation, labor organization, campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, or other entity, except a political action committee, shall issue a form of political publication for or against an issue, or shall make an expenditure for the purpose of financing political communications in support of or opposition to a ballot issue or question through public political advertising, unless the name and residence or business address of the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the corporation, labor organization, campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, or other entity that issues or otherwise is responsible for that political publication or that makes an expenditure for that political communication through public political advertising appears in a conspicuous place in that political publication or is contained within that political communication.

(6) No limited political action committee shall do either of the following unless the name and residence or business address of the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the limited political action committee involved appears in a conspicuous place in the political publication for or against a ballot issue described in division (A)(6)(a) of this section or is contained within the political communication described in division (A)(6)(b) of this section:

(a) Issue a form of political publication for or against a ballot issue that costs in excess of the designated amount or that is issued in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at the request or suggestion of, a candidate, a campaign committee, a legislative campaign fund, a political party, a political action committee with ten or more members, or a limited political action committee that spends in excess of the designated amount for a related or the same or similar political publication for or against an issue;

(b) Make an expenditure in excess of the designated amount in support of or opposition to a ballot issue or make an expenditure in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at the request or suggestion of, a candidate, a campaign committee, a legislative campaign fund, a political party, a political action committee with ten or more members, or a limited political action committee that spends in excess of the designated amount in support of or opposition to the same ballot issue, for the purpose of financing political communications in support of or opposition to that ballot issue through public political advertising.

(7) No political action committee with ten or more members shall issue a form of political publication for or against an issue, or shall make an expenditure for the purpose of financing political communications in support of or opposition to a ballot issue or question through public political advertising, unless the name and residence or business address of the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the political action committee that issues or otherwise is responsible for that political publication or that makes an expenditure for that political communication appears in a conspicuous place in that political publication or is contained within that political communication.

(8) The disclaimer "paid political advertisement" is not sufficient to meet the requirements of this section.

(9) If the political publication described in division (A) of this section is issued by the regularly constituted central or executive committee of a political party that is organized as provided in this chapter, it shall be sufficiently identified if it bears the name of the committee and its chairperson or treasurer.

(10) If more than one piece of printed matter or printed political communications are mailed as a single packet, the requirements of division (A) of this section are met if one of the pieces of printed matter or printed political communications in the packet contains the name and residence or business address of the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the organization or entity that issues or is responsible for the printed matter or other printed political communications.

(11) This section does not apply to the transmittal of personal correspondence that is not reproduced by machine for general distribution.

(12) The secretary of state, by rule, may exempt from the requirements of this section, printed matter and certain other kinds of printed communications such as campaign buttons, balloons, pencils, or similar items, the size or nature of which makes it unreasonable to add an identification or disclaimer.

(13) The disclaimer or identification described in division (A) of this section, when paid for by a campaign committee, shall be identified by the words "paid for by" followed by the name and address of the campaign committee and the appropriate officer of the committee, identified by name and title. The identification or disclaimer may use reasonable abbreviations for common terms such as "treasurer" or "committee".

(B)(1) No candidate, campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political contributing entity, political party, political action committee, limited political action committee, or other entity shall utter or cause to be uttered, over the broadcasting facilities of any radio or television station within this state, any communication that is designed to promote the nomination, election, or defeat of a candidate, or the adoption or defeat of an issue or to influence the voters in an election, unless the speaker identifies the speaker with the speaker's name and residence address or unless the communication identifies the chairperson, treasurer, or secretary of the organization responsible for the communication with the name and residence or business address of that officer, except that communications by radio need not broadcast the residence or business address of the officer. However, a radio station, for a period of at least six months, shall keep the residence or business address on file and divulge it to any person upon request.

No person operating a broadcast station or an organ of printed media shall broadcast or print a paid political communication that does not contain the identification required by this section.

(2) Division (B) of this section does not apply to any communications made on behalf of a radio or television station or network by any employee of such radio or television station or network while acting in the course of the employee's employment.

(3) No candidate or entity described in division (B)(1) of this section shall use or cause to be used a false, fictitious, or fraudulent name or address in the making or issuing of a publication or communication included within the provisions of this section.

(C) No candidate, campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, political action committee, limited political action committee, or other person or entity shall conduct a telephone bank for the purpose of promoting the nomination, election, or defeat of a candidate or the adoption or defeat of an issue or to influence the voters in an election, unless the call includes a disclaimer that identifies the name of the candidate, campaign committee, legislative campaign fund, political party, political action committee, limited political action committee, or other person or entity paying for the telephone bank.

(D) Before a prosecution may commence under this section, a complaint shall be filed with the Ohio elections commission under section 3517.153 of the Revised Code. After the complaint is filed, the commission shall proceed in accordance with sections 3517.154 to 3517.157 of the Revised Code.