

FEC Compliance Guidelines

Democrats Abroad is a subordinate committee of the Democratic National Committee. As such it is subject to the same legal restrictions on its activities that govern the DNC. Anyone purporting to act for Democrats Abroad must abide by these restrictions. Below is a summary of some of the more important rules.

1. No contributions or donations from foreign nationals. No one acting on behalf of Democrats Abroad may solicit or accept anything of value from a foreign national. This prohibition applies to in-kind donations including discounted food or rental space not available to the general public. Even reimbursed personal spending by a foreign national is prohibited. Any contribution from an U.S. citizen with a foreign spouse must come from the funds of the U.S. citizen.

2. Volunteer activity by foreign nationals. A foreign national may volunteer his or her uncompensated services (for example, stuffing envelopes) to a country committee. If the services result in the production of an item of value for example, a piece of art, the country committee may not accept that item. The FEC has clarified this rule to allow entertainers who are foreign nationals to perform at events provided that the entertainer does not pay any of the costs of the event.

3. No corporate or labor union contributions. No one acting on behalf of Democrats Abroad may solicit or accept anything of value from a corporation or labor union regardless of where the organization is domiciled.

4. No public communications promoting a Federal candidate. Only Democrats Abroad International may pay for public communications including newspapers, television, radio, direct mail of over 500 pieces and phone banks making over 500 similar calls that promote, support, attack or oppose a Federal candidate or political party. (See point 10) Country committees may not purchase public political advertising that mentions a Federal candidate or promotes the Democratic Party. One very limited exception would be advertising directed exclusively at the recruitment of new members.

5. E-mail and postings on the Internet are not public communications.

Individuals and groups including country committees may freely use the Internet and e-mail to organize and to promote Federal candidates. The one restriction on use of the Internet is that any solicitation or acceptance of contributions via the Internet must fully comply with Federal law. (The posting or the e-mailing of a link to a candidate's site is permissible and would not expose the country committee to liability relating to the content of the linked site.)

6. Country committees may freely communicate to their members. There is no restriction on country committees communicating to their own members. The communication must be restricted to members and may include telephone calls, newsletters, mail and e-mail. The communication may advertise a candidate, party or other political organization's event. This is an exception to rule set forth in point 4 above.

7. Distribution of literature at country committee meetings. Country committees may freely distribute candidate-specific materials at country committee meetings.

8. Non-partisan voter registration and absentee ballot campaigns. Country committees are free to engage in non-partisan voter registration and absentee ballot campaigns. The committee must provide these services without regard to the party or candidate preference of the person who is being assisted. The committee can pay the costs of such activities without incurring any FEC reporting obligation. The

committee may conduct these activities with other organizations but should pay for its own expenses related to the joint program.

9. No contributions to Federal candidates. Country committees may not contribute directly to Federal candidates, political party committee or any other political committee. Whether a country committee may contribute to a State candidate depends on State law. Therefore it is critical for a country committee to understand thoroughly the registration and reporting requirements of State law before contributing in a State.

10. Registration with the Federal Election Commission. Unless a country committee is prepared to comply with all the record-keeping and reporting requirements of Federal law, it should avoid engaging in activities that would require it to register and report to the FEC. To avoid having to report, a country committee should not 1) contribute to any Federal candidate, political party or any other political committee; 2) expend more than one thousand dollars in a calendar year expressly advocating the election or defeat of any Federal candidate; 3) spend more than one thousand dollars in a calendar year for public communications promoting, supporting, attacking or opposing a Federal candidate; or 4) engage in any combination of these activities that exceed one thousand dollars in a calendar year.

11. No Transfers. Unless a country committee is registered with the FEC, it may not transfer funds to Democrats Abroad International. Democrats Abroad International will no longer accept such transfers.

12. Penalties. The penalty for a knowing and willful violation of federal campaign finance law is up to five years imprisonment for each violation.