



MEMORANDUM

November 14, 2012

To: Honorable Tom Coburn

Subject: Public Funding for Presidential Nominating Conventions, 1976-2012

This memorandum responds to your request for a summary of public funding for presidential nominating conventions between 1976 and 2012. Data analyzed in this memorandum show that the Presidential Election Campaign Fund (PECF) has provided approximately \$220.2 million to presidential nominating convention committees since 1976. With two minor exceptions, in 1976 and 2008, Democratic and Republican convention committees received equal amounts. A third party convention—for the Reform Party in 2000—received PECF funds once. Although this memorandum is confined to the scope you requested, additional discussion appears in other CRS products.¹

Overview of Convention Funding Provisions

Presidential nominating conventions are financed through a combination of public and private funds. This memorandum provides information solely about public funds provided to the party convention committees by the U.S. Treasury, as certified by the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Public funds provided to the nominating conventions are allocated from the PECF, a designated account within the Treasury's General Fund to house voluntary designations from individual income-taxpayers used to support publicly financed presidential campaigns. These grants are awarded to the relevant party's convention committee.² Qualifying convention committees are not required to accept PECF funds, but they have chosen to do so since the program's inception. Third parties are eligible for limited public convention funds.³

¹ On convention financing, see CRS Report RL34630, *Federal Funding of Presidential Nominating Conventions: Overview and Policy Options*, by R. Sam Garrett and Shawn Reese. On public financing generally, see CRS Report RL34534, *Public Financing of Presidential Campaigns: Overview and Analysis*, by R. Sam Garrett; and CRS Report R41604, *Proposals to Eliminate Public Financing of Presidential Campaigns*, by R. Sam Garrett. On campaign finance policy generally, see CRS Report R41542, *The State of Campaign Finance Policy: Recent Developments and Issues for Congress*, by R. Sam Garrett.

² Convention committees are separate political committees (i.e., candidate committees, party committees, and political action committees (PACs)) "responsible for conducting the day to day arrangements and operations of that party's presidential nominating convention," including receiving public funds. See 11 C.F.R. § 9008.3(a)(2). This memorandum does not address host committees or private fundraising.

³ 26 U.S.C. § 9008(b).

Amounts in the PECF are determined by “checkoff” designations on individuals’ federal income tax returns. Individuals may choose to designate \$3 of their tax liability to the PECF. Married couples filing jointly may designate a total of \$6 to the fund. Congress does not appropriate funds for any portion of the presidential public financing program, including convention funding.⁴

The Internal Revenue Code (IRC), which contains most public financing provisions, requires that sufficient funds for convention grants be reserved before other elements of presidential public funding can be distributed. Once convention grants are reserved, the Treasury Department may distribute general election grants and primary matching funds to participating presidential candidates.⁵ The FEC is responsible for certifying that public funding recipients have met eligibility criteria found in the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), the IRC, and FEC regulations.⁶ The Treasury Department disburses funds based on FEC certification decisions.

Overview of Convention Funding Amounts

Figure 1 and **Table 1** below summarize PECF convention funding between 1976 and 2012. To summarize the findings:

- The PECF has provided approximately \$220.2 million to presidential nominating convention committees since 1976. This amount is approximately \$331.5 million when adjusted for inflation to September 2012 levels.⁷
- With two minor exceptions, Democratic and Republican convention committees received equal amounts. Specifically, Democratic convention committees received approximately \$110.8 million overall (\$166.6 million in constant amounts), compared with approximately \$106.8 million overall (\$161.6 million in constant amounts) for Republicans. Most of the difference is accounted for by a 2008 Republican convention repayment to the PECF for one day’s funding after the GOP gathering ended a day early due to Hurricane Gustav. The Republican convention also received approximately \$222,000 less than the Democratic convention in 1976, although the reason is unclear.
- A third party convention received PECF funding only once. In 2000, the Reform Party convention committee received approximately \$2.5 million (\$3.4 million in constant amounts).

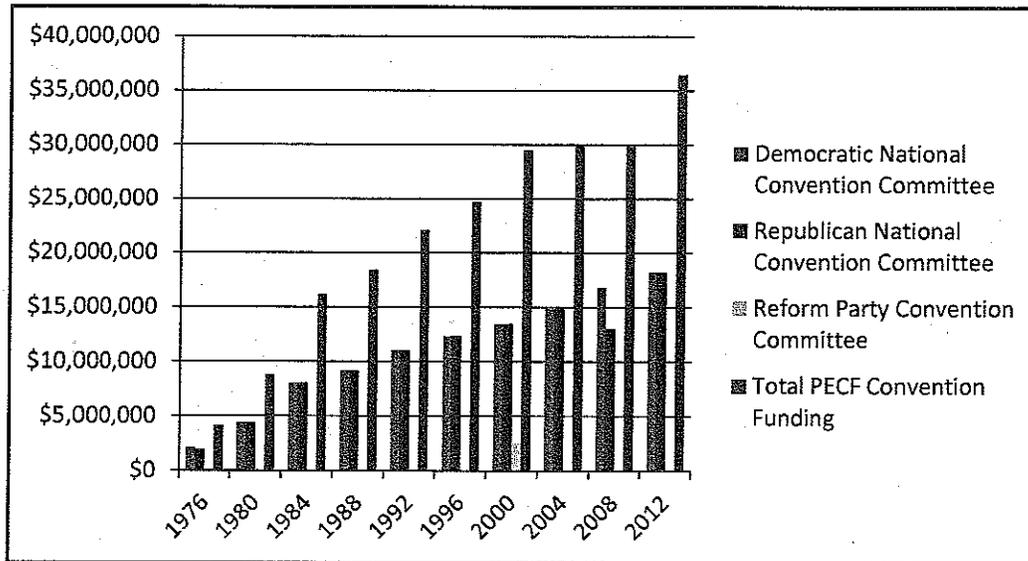
⁴ Congress, does, however, appropriate FEC funds used to administer the program.

⁵ On prioritization of convention funding, see 26 U.S.C. § 9008(a).

⁶ FECA is 2 U.S.C. § 431 *et seq.*

⁷ Some of the totals discussed here do not appear in the table or figure, but were calculated using the data in the table/figure.

Figure I. Presidential Election Campaign Fund Convention Grants in Current Dollars, 1976-2012



Source: CRS figure based on data provided by the Federal Election Commission.

Notes: The figure displays PECF convention grant amounts only. Amounts are shown in current dollars (i.e., unadjusted for inflation). According to notes accompanying the FEC data, in October 2012 commission staff reconciled its data with that provided by the Treasury Department. It is possible these amounts differ from those provided in other sources, including previously produced CRS products.

Table I. Presidential Election Campaign Fund Convention Grants in Current and Constant Dollars, 1976-2012

Year	Democratic Convention Committee current dollars	Democratic Convention Committee constant dollars	Republican Convention Committee current dollars	Republican Convention Committee constant dollars	Reform Convention Committee current dollars	Reform Convention Committee constant dollars
1976	\$2,185,829.00	\$8,889,562.94	\$1,963,800.00	\$7,986,591.68	—	—
1980	\$4,416,000.00	\$12,401,617.86	\$4,416,000.00	\$12,401,617.86	—	—
1984	\$8,080,000.00	\$17,995,847.55	\$8,080,000.00	\$17,995,847.55	—	—
1988	\$9,220,000.00	\$18,035,270.84	\$9,220,000.00	\$18,035,270.84	—	—
1992	\$11,048,000.00	\$18,222,270.39	\$11,048,000.00	\$18,222,270.39	—	—
1996	\$12,364,000.00	\$18,235,284.56	\$12,364,000.00	\$18,235,284.56	—	—
2000	\$13,512,000.00	\$18,157,789.69	\$13,512,000.00	\$18,157,789.69	\$2,522,690	\$3,390,058.80
2004	\$14,924,000.00	\$18,282,255.52	\$14,924,000.00	\$18,282,255.52	—	—

Year	Democratic Convention Committee current dollars	Democratic Convention Committee constant dollars	Republican Convention Committee current dollars	Republican Convention Committee constant dollars	Reform Convention Committee current dollars	Reform Convention Committee constant dollars
2008	\$16,820,760.00	\$18,078,900.94	\$13,039,136.00	\$14,014,423.14	—	—
2012	\$18,248,300.00	\$18,248,300.00	\$18,248,300.00	\$18,248,300.00	—	—
Totals	\$110,818,889.00	\$166,547,100.29	\$106,815,236.00	\$161,579,651.23	\$2,522,690	\$3,390,058.80

Source: CRS analysis of current-dollar data provided by the Federal Election Commission.

Notes: According to notes accompanying the FEC data, in October 2012 commission staff reconciled its data with that provided by the Treasury Department. It is possible these amounts differ from those provided in other sources, including previously produced CRS products. CRS calculated constant dollars (inflation-adjusted amounts) using annual average Consumer Price Index (CPI) amounts provided by the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpi.ai.txt>; 1982-84=100. Amounts are adjusted to 2012 dollars based on data for September 2012, the most recent data available as of this writing.