

## **21-404. Campaign committees.**

A. **Campaign committees.** Candidates in [~~both~~] partisan, non-partisan, and retention elections shall establish committees of one or more responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate using media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law or these rules. Campaign committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, and obtain public statements of support on behalf of the candidate, subject to the restrictions of these rules including, but not limited to, Rule 21-402 NMRA. Candidates shall not personally solicit or personally accept contributions for their own campaigns. Nor shall candidates solicit personally, or through campaign committees, contributions for the campaigns of other candidates or offices. All campaign contributions shall be paid or turned over to the campaign committee, and shall be managed and disbursed by the committee. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others. The candidate shall take reasonable steps to ensure that his or her campaign committee complies with applicable provisions of this Code and other applicable law.

B. **Unused campaign funds.** A candidate for judicial office in either a partisan, non-partisan, or retention election who has unused campaign funds remaining after election, and after all expenses of the campaign and election have been paid, shall refund the remaining funds pro rata to the campaign contributors, or donate the funds to a charitable organization, or to the State of New Mexico, as the candidate may choose, within thirty (30) days after the date the election results are certified.

[Adopted by Supreme Court Order No. 11-8300-045, effective January 1, 2012; as amended by Supreme Court Order No. 15-8300-003, effective November 1, 2015.]

### **Committee commentary. —**

[1] Judicial candidates are prohibited from personally soliciting campaign contributions or personally accepting campaign contributions. This rule recognizes that judicial candidates must raise campaign funds to support their candidacies, and permits candidates, other than candidates for appointive judicial office, to establish campaign committees to solicit and accept reasonable financial contributions or in-kind contributions.

[2] Campaign committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of campaign funds, and generally conduct campaigns. Candidates are responsible for compliance with the requirements of election law and other applicable law, and for the activities of their campaign committees.

[3] At the start of a campaign, the candidate must instruct the campaign committee to solicit or accept only such contributions as are reasonable in amount, appropriate under the circumstances, and in conformity with applicable law. Although lawyers and others who might appear before a successful candidate for judicial office are permitted to make campaign contributions, the candidate should instruct his or her campaign committee to be especially cautious in connection with such contributions, so they do not create grounds for disqualification if the candidate is elected to judicial office. *See* Rule 21-211 NMRA.

[4] Contributions for campaigns are limited to sources and amounts that do not create an appearance of impropriety. Candidates for election to judicial office are required to create campaign committees, *see* Rule 21-402(A)(1)(e) NMRA, to solicit and accept contributions, to solicit public support, and to receive, manage, and disburse all campaign contributions. Each candidate must instruct the campaign committee to solicit or accept only those contributions that are reasonable under the circumstances and that meet the requirements of this rule.

[5] Campaign committees established under this rule should attempt to manage campaign finances responsibly, avoiding deficits that may necessitate post-election fundraising.

[6] Judicial candidates for statewide judicial elective office may elect to participate in public financing that imposes restrictions on fundraising. *See* NMSA 1978, §§ 1-19A-1 to -17. The restrictions governing campaign finances and requirements for campaign committees apply to publicly financed campaigns. A judicial candidate who seeks or has been certified for public financing must comply with Rule 21-404 NMRA. Seed money under NMSA 1978, Sections 1-19A-2(K) and 1-19A-5, and qualifying contributions under NMSA 1978, Sections 1-19A-2(H) and 1-19A-4, are considered campaign contributions for the purposes of these rules. Unused campaign funds for a publicly financed judicial candidate must, by law, be returned to the public election fund. [Adopted by Supreme Court Order No. 11-8300-045, effective January 1, 2012; as amended by Supreme Court Order No. 15-8300-003, effective November 1, 2015.]