

by **Jason Bennett** on **Thu, 19 Jan at 3:01 PM** via **Email**

Re: Commission seeks input on inflationary adjustments to reporting thresholds, contribution limits | Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC)

External Email

Dear Public Disclosure Commission -

Thank you for considering inflationary adjustments to the contribution limits and other thresholds for campaigns for the 2023 cycle. I am submitting comments as a political professional, specifically while wearing my treasurer hat.

If the PDC adopts an increase of most legislative donations from \$1000 per donation per election to \$1150 per election, that would constitute a 15% increase in the contribution limit. However, many campaign expenditures have increased by much, much more than 15% since 2016 - the last time the contribution limit was adjusted for inflation.

Take, for example, postage costs for campaign. Postage was .47 for first class postage in 2016. It is now .60 per first class mail. That represents a 27.65% increase. For political mail rates and handling charges, the costs can even be higher, depending on the particular mailing house a client is using.

Another example of a typical campaign expense that has increased faster than the inflationary adjustments detailed here is wages. The average monthly wage for a Democratic Senate staffer in 2016 was approximately \$3500/month. In 2022, it was \$4500 which is 28.6% increase in those last six years. And while we applaud the wage increases and want to continue providing more and better wages on campaigns, the contribution limit hasn't kept pace with the larger share of the campaign budget that salaries now represent.

A final example of campaign costs that have far exceeded the inflationary standards in the PDC's chart is printing of signs. In 2016, you could order 100 signs and stakes for \$5.35 a piece. In 2022, that price jumped up to an eye-popping \$8.50 a sign - a 58.9% increase.

I would respectfully ask that the PDC consider the highest contribution limit increase in their discretionary power since it has been more than six years since we've had an increase. Further, as you can see the costs for campaigns have far exceeded the 15% suggested increase.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Jason Bennett, Treasurer
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