

A:

Title: Campaign Spending Commission electronic filing system

Category: Digital government to citizen (G to C)

State: State of Hawaii

B. Executive Summary

Prior to the launch of the Candidate filing system, anyone wanting to review contribution or expenditures by Noncandidate Committees (aka PACS) had to come into the Commissions offices. This made it very difficult for the media to conduct research in an expeditious manner prior to writing a story, or to conduct long term research projects. It also made it all but impossible for neighbor islanders and out-of-state, out-of-nation people to view reports.

The first reports filed in the Noncandidate Committee Filing System became public online in September 2008. Reports are now legible. In the past, many reports were scribbled and very difficult for anyone to decipher. Members of the public have called and expressed their appreciation for having the reports accessible online.

Reports can be viewed 24/7 from anywhere in the world, giving the public ultimate transparency.

Filers can now meet reporting deadlines from anywhere in the world and have filed their reports from Belgium and Arizona. They can even file their reports from a cruise ship.

Prior to the launch of the Noncandidate Committee Filing System most reports would be filed in person at the Commission office. This created a loss of staff time to about weeks time whenever a reporting deadline approached, as the staff had to assist walk-ins, write a receipt, then file the receipts in our records. It also saved the creation manila filing folders for each committee, sometimes as many as 350 and the requisite storage space it took.

The Commission staff no longer has to walk to the filing cabinet, look for a report or reports, and then refile the reports after questions are answered or letters are drafted. The commission staff no longer has to run copies of reports for those needing copies. Sometimes requests were voluminous. It also allows the staff to provide quick responses to phone calls because the reports can be accessed as we speak. It helps the communication when the staff member can the caller can view the report online at the same time as the phone call.

C. Description

The Campaign Spending Commission worked to get legislation passed requiring electronic filing for Noncandidate Committees in 2008, which would make Hawaii one of the most transparent states in the nation for campaign finance. Passage of the bill put a tremendous amount of pressure on the team to build a Noncandidate Committee Filing System fast and well, so the Legislature would not change its mind and take it away.

The Noncandidate filing system was built through cooperative team effort between the Campaign Spending Commission and the Information and Communication Services Division. The system is viewable at www.hawaii.gov/campaign, click on "View Candidate and Noncandidate Committee Reports", then click on "View Noncandidate Committees Contributions and Expenditures".

D. Significance

The Noncandidate Filing system was completed on time, even though time was short and a major addition to the project arose mid-stream when there was a third party request to build-in a feature to import accounting software data into the system.

Perhaps the best indicator of a project well-performed is national recognition. The Campaign Disclosure Project, which is funded by a grant from the Pew charitable Trust, conducts an annual nationwide study of the 50 states' campaign finance laws, their electronic filing systems and the usability of their websites.

Hawaii was graded #1 in the Nation, with an A+ for electronic filing.

The Commission is dedicated to the integrity and transparency of the campaign finance process. From this mission, a five year Strategic plan was developed. Goal 3 is to "increase the technological capacity to improve access, reduce paperwork, and increase compliance". Action items are to: a) develop front-end systems so all committees can file online, and access additional information and assistance online; b) develop user diagnostics to serve as an early warning system for committees on potential violations; c) increase the analysis capability of the Commission; and d) keep the system current and updated.

E. Benefit

The State of Hawaii is extremely proud of this teams accomplishments. Many other States have paid or are currently putting out to bid \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 to build an equivalent system.

Respectfully submitted

Debra A. Gagne, Administrator – Information and Communications Services Division

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