

Item 7 - Disclosure and Engagement Report



Francis Upton IV, Chair
Tanya Bayeva, Vice Chair
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Vincent Steele
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Nicolas Heidorn, Executive Director

TO: City of Oakland, Public Ethics Commission
FROM: Alex Van Buskirk, Lead Analyst, Compliance and Disclosure
Jelani Killings, Lead Analyst, Education and Engagement
DATE: March 5, 2025
RE: Disclosure and Engagement Monthly Report for the March 19, 2025,
Public Ethics Commission Meeting

This memorandum provides a summary of major accomplishments in the Public Ethics Commission's (PEC or Commission) Disclosure and Engagement program activities since the last regular meeting. Commission Staff disclosure activities focus on improving online tools for public access to local campaign finance and other disclosure data, enhancing compliance with disclosure rules, and conducting data analysis for Public Ethics Commission projects and programs as required. Engagement activities include training and resources provided to the regulated community, as well as general outreach to Oakland residents to raise awareness of the Commission's role and services and to provide opportunities for dialogue between the Commission and community members.

Compliance with Disclosure Requirements (Includes 2024 General Election Spending Analysis)

Commission Staff conducts filing officer duties as required by state and local law and aims to help candidates, lobbyists and City officials submit required disclosure reports and ensure residents can easily access campaign finance, lobbyist, and ethics-related data and information.

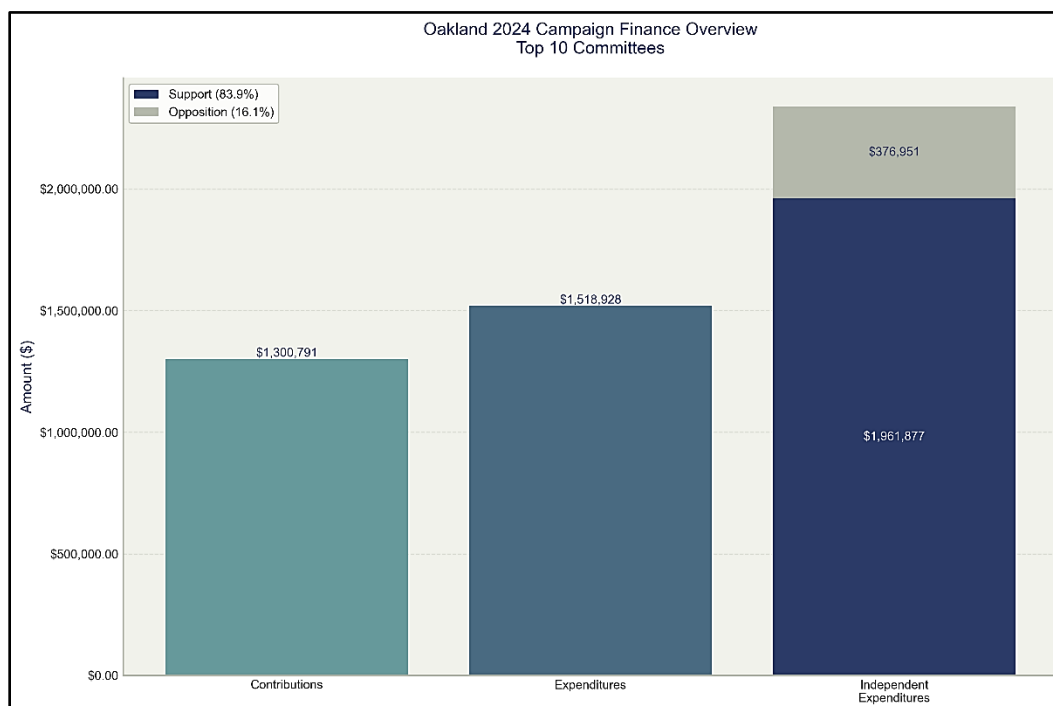
2025 Special Election Campaign Finance Disclosure – On April 15, 2025, there is a Special Election in the City of Oakland for the positions of Mayor and City Council District 2. As of March 5, 2025, there are ten candidates for Mayor and six candidates for City Council District 2 who have qualified to appear on the ballot.

The nomination period for Mayoral and City Council District 2 candidates in the April 15, 2025, Special Election closed on January 17, 2025 (the nomination period first opened on December 23, 2024).

Commission Staff coordinated with the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) on setting up a special election filing schedule, which includes pre-election statements (March 6, 2025 and April 3, 2025), for the April 15, 2025, Special Election. Commission Staff provided the details of the Special Election filing schedule to relevant Oakland committees and included a copy of the schedule on the PEC website for education and information purposes.

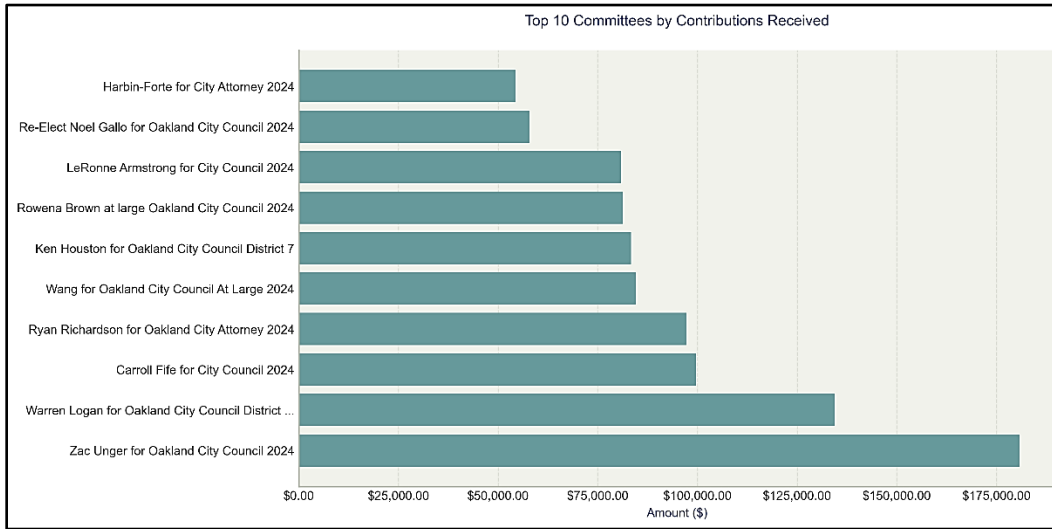
The next campaign finance filing deadline is the First Pre-Election statement due March 6, 2025, covering activity from January 1, 2025 through March 1, 2025. All candidates appearing on the April 15, 2025 Special Election ballot must file this First Pre-Election statement for their committees. These filings are made on either a Form 460 (for candidates raising or spending \$2,000 or more on their campaigns) or Form 470 (for candidates raising or spending less than \$2,000).

General Election 2024 Spending Analysis¹ – The Oakland 2024 campaign finance landscape is characterized by significant financial activity across various committees and independent expenditure groups. A total of \$1,300,791.45 in contributions was raised by the top 10 candidate committees, while total expenditures from these committees amounted to \$1,518,928.01. (It is likely committees spent more than they raised because they entered the 2024 election cycle with sufficient cash on hand. Other committees may have reported loans/debt.) Additionally, independent expenditures supporting or opposing candidates reached a total of \$2,338,828.28, with \$1,961,877.25 allocated towards support spending (83.9%) and \$376,951.03 directed toward opposition spending (16.1%).

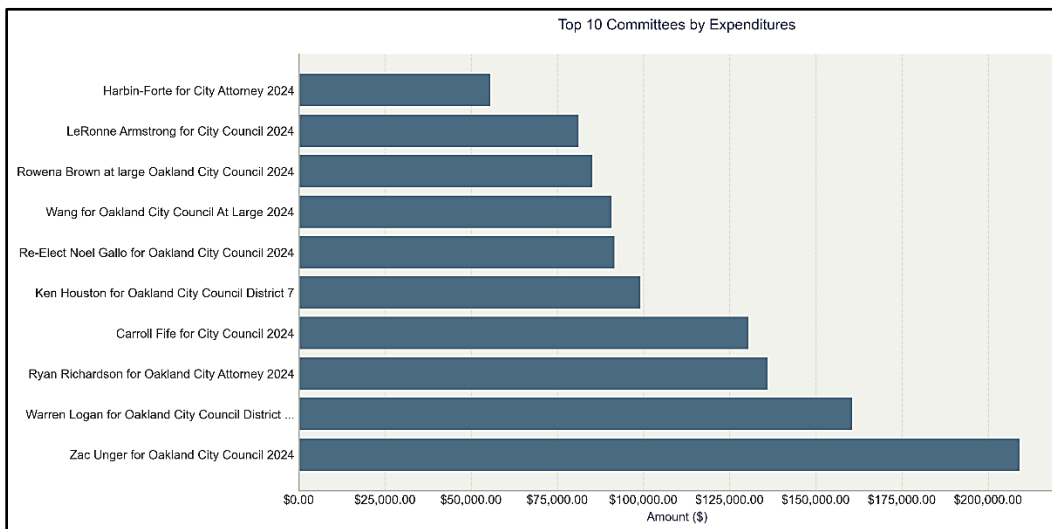


¹ This is based on data from <https://public.netfile.com/pub2/excel/COAKBrowsable/> as reported (as is) by committees.

Among the top candidate committee fundraisers, the Zac Unger for Oakland City Council 2024 (D1 candidate) committee led with total contributions of \$180,706.91, followed by Warren Logan for Oakland City Council District 3 2024 (D3 candidate) at \$134,446.00 and Carroll Fife for City Council 2024 (D3 candidate) at \$99,602.36. Other notable committees include Ryan Richardson for Oakland City Attorney 2024 (City Attorney candidate) (\$97,202.82), Wang for Oakland City Council At Large 2024 (At-Large candidate) (\$84,557.65), and Ken Houston for Oakland City Council District 7 (D7 candidate) (\$83,339.85).



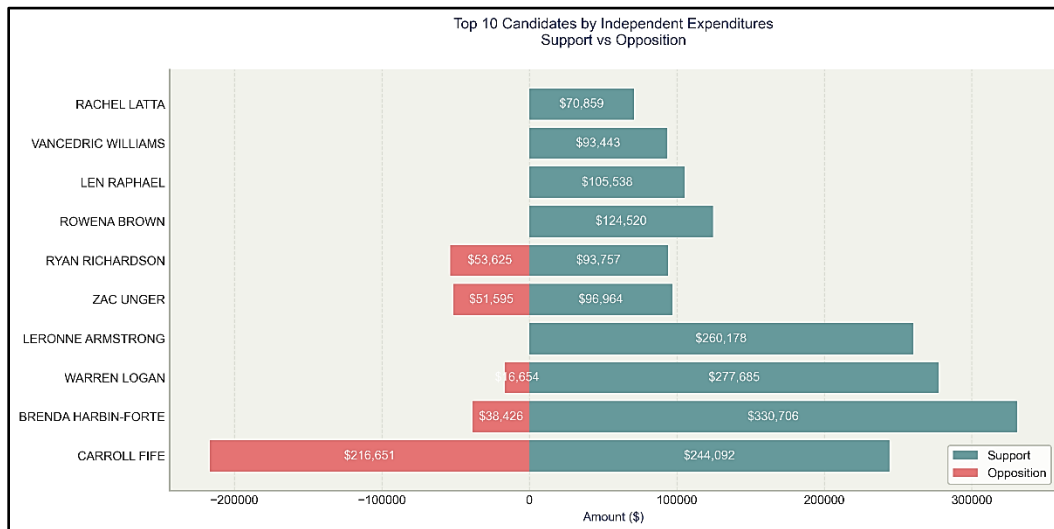
On the expenditure side, Zac Unger for Oakland City Council 2024 (D1 candidate) was again the highest spender at \$209,046.42. Warren Logan for Oakland City Council District 3 2024 (D3 candidate) followed with \$160,526.15 in expenditures, while Ryan Richardson for Oakland City Attorney 2024 (City Attorney candidate) spent \$135,990.19. The committee for Carroll Fife for City Council 2024 (D3 candidate) recorded expenditures of \$130,509.86, with Ken Houston for Oakland City Council District 7 (D7 candidate) spending \$99,137.66.



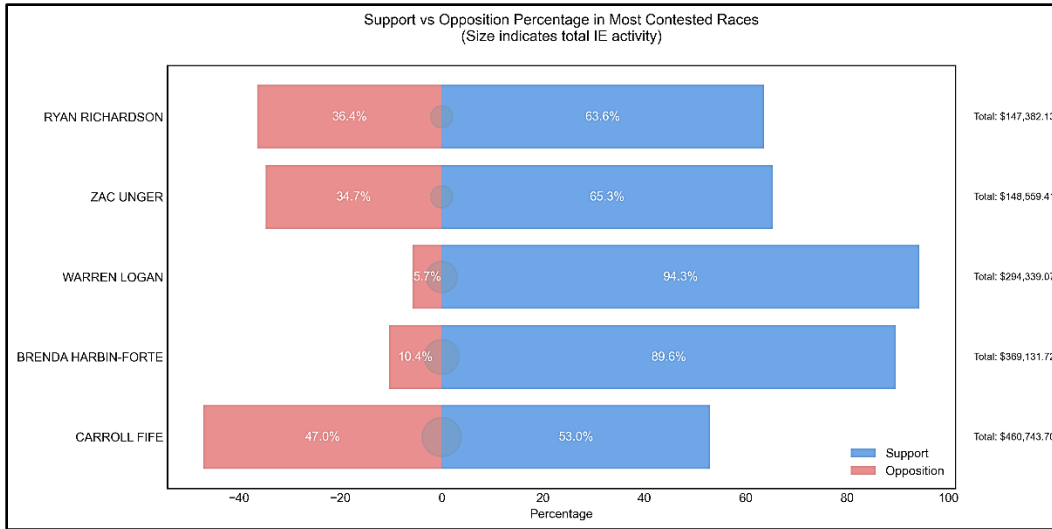
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Independent expenditures were arguably a major factor in the election, with Carroll Fife (D3 candidate) being the candidate with the highest total independent expenditure activity at \$460,743.70, which included \$244,092.43 in support spending and \$216,651.27 in opposition spending. Brenda Harbin-Forte (City Attorney candidate) followed with \$369,131.72 in total independent expenditures, the majority (\$330,706.14) for support. Warren Logan (D3 candidate) received \$277,685.21 in support spending and faced \$16,653.86 in opposition, bringing total independent expenditure activity to \$294,339.07. LeRonne Armstrong (At-Large candidate), with no recorded opposition spending, benefited from \$260,177.63 in independent expenditure support.

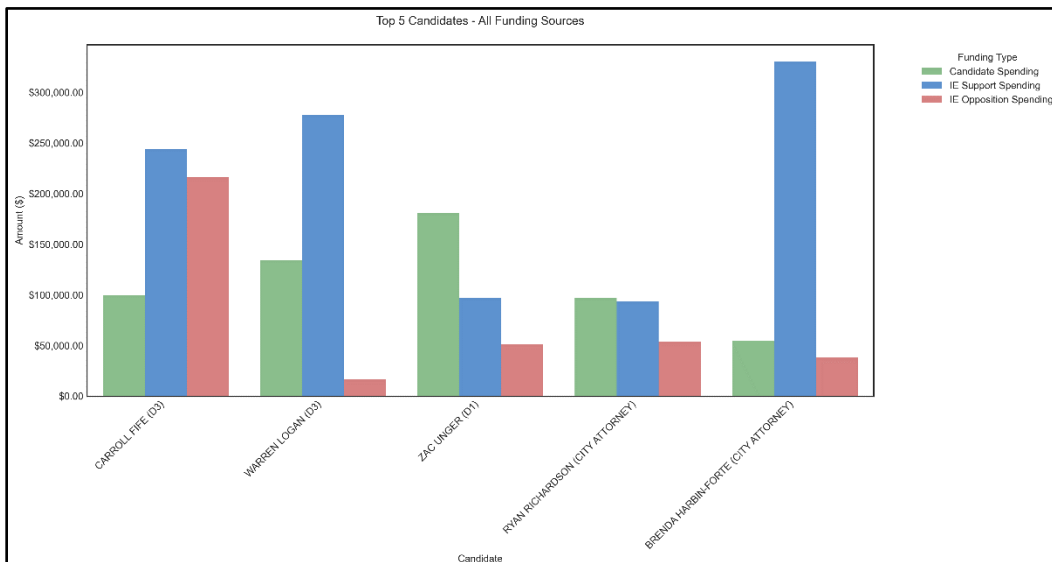
Among other candidates receiving significant independent expenditures, Zac Unger (D1 candidate) had a total of \$148,559.41 in independent spending, with \$96,964.09 in support and \$51,595.32 in opposition. Ryan Richardson (City Attorney candidate) saw \$147,382.13 in independent expenditures, with \$93,757.13 in support and \$53,625.00 in opposition. Rowena Brown (At-Large candidate) and Len Raphael (D1 candidate) received \$124,519.63 and \$105,538.32 in independent support spending, respectively, without any opposition expenditures. VanCedric Williams (OUSD D3 candidate) and Rachel Latta (OUSD D1 candidate) also received independent support, totaling \$93,442.75 and \$70,858.60, respectively, with no reported opposition spending.



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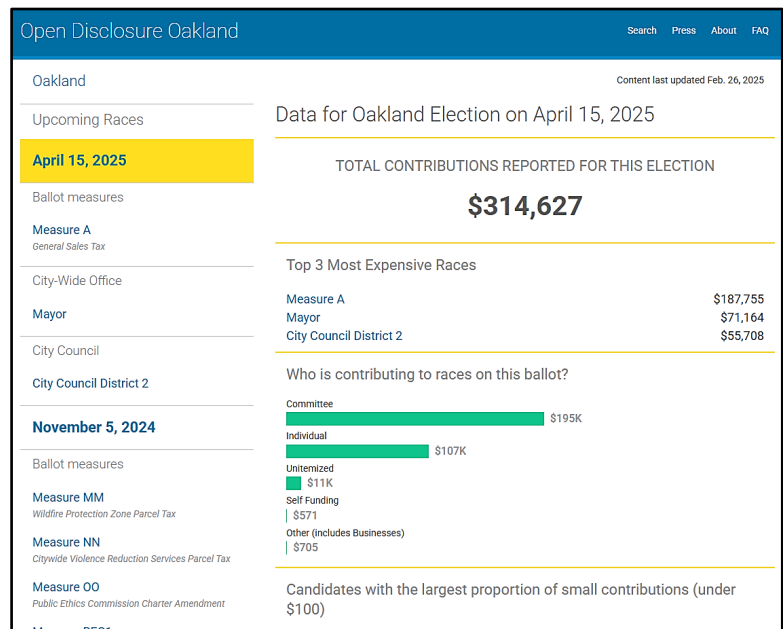
Comparing candidate expenditures versus independent expenditure spending, Carroll Fife’s direct campaign spending was \$130,509.86, while independent expenditures totaled \$460,743.70, meaning external spending on her behalf was more than three times her own campaign’s expenditures (this includes total spending against Fife in the D3 contest). Warren Logan’s direct campaign expenditures were \$160,526.15, compared to independent expenditures of \$294,339.07 (\$277,685.21 in support). Zac Unger spent \$209,046.42 from his campaign, with an additional \$148,559.41 in independent expenditures (\$96,964.09 in support). Ryan Richardson’s campaign expenditures totaled \$135,990.19, while independent expenditures amounted to \$147,382.13 (\$93,757.13 in support). Note that opposition spending does not include spending in favor of an opponent. Independent expenditures are either marked “support” or “oppose” on their Form 496 filing, and the corresponding totals reflect which “support” or “oppose” for a given candidate was marked.



Campaign statements are available to view and download at the Commission’s [Public Portal for Campaign Finance Disclosure](#). Campaign finance data, graphs, and visualizations are available via the [City’s Open Data portal](#) and Commission-sponsored apps [Show Me the Money](#) and [Open Disclosure Oakland](#), as well as links on the PEC website.

ILLUMINATING DISCLOSURE DATA

Open Disclosure Oakland – The [opendisclosure.io](#) campaign finance app is live with the data for the April 15, 2025 Special Election. Open Disclosure Oakland, a nonpartisan tool, was developed by volunteers from [OpenOakland](#), a civic technologist group, in partnership with Commission Staff to give all Oakland residents equal access to campaign finance data. The Open Disclosure Oakland website shows funds donated to both political candidates and ballot measure committees and



provides clear summaries of money raised and spent as well as financial trends for each election. The website also includes a search function that makes campaign donation records easy to search and sort and allows users to search campaign donors by name across multiple campaigns and elections.

Open Disclosure Oakland is updated regularly with data imported directly from the [City’s campaign finance database](#) and includes a notification system that sends subscribers alerts about new campaign reports.

As in prior elections, in March the PEC will purchase advertisements to increase public awareness of these transparency tools.

Lobbyist Registration Program – The Oakland Lobbyist Registration Act (LRA) requires any person that qualifies as a lobbyist to register annually with the Commission before conducting any lobbying activity. Registration renewals were due January 31, 2025.

To date, as of March 5, 2025, 43 lobbyists are currently registered with the City of Oakland for 2025. Note that Commission Staff is pleased to report that with the assistance of the Information Technology Department over many months in 2024, a new point-of-sale (POS) system has been implemented that went live on January 13, 2025. This new POS system allows

new lobbyists to pay their fee electronically upon registering with the PEC. The benefit is real time service and a greatly reduced burden for Commission Staff in processing/issuing invoices to these new lobbyists. (Lobbyists are still able to submit a waiver application, which will be reviewed for determination on a case-by-case basis.) Commission Staff is in the process of working with two registered lobbyists in 2025 who need to pay the \$500 registration fee – as noted in prior reports to the Commission, the registration fee process can take several weeks after an initial registration, as invoices need to be created and issued, then paid. These two lobbyists registered prior to the POS system being implemented.

January 31, 2025, was the deadline for lobbyists to file their Quarterly Activity Report for Quarter 4 2024. Only one lobbyist has not filed for Q4 2024, and three of lobbyists filed late. Commission Staff is in the process of issuing late fee notices to the lobbyists who filed late, and is in the process of referring the one non-filer to the Enforcement Unit after multiple filing notices were issued without a response.

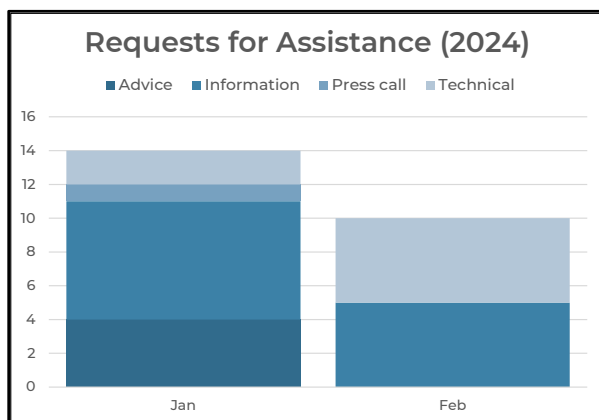
In November 2023, the Oakland City Council adopted amendments to the Lobbyist Registration Act including a new requirement that lobbyists take a training provided by the Commission. Under PEC Rules, lobbyists have 60 days from their date of registration to complete the training, which is required every two years. Because most lobbyists took the training last year, they are not required to take it this year. Commission Staff is working with two new registered lobbyists to ensure full compliance with this training requirement.

An up-to-date list of registered lobbyists and lobbyist activity reports with links to view and download individual reports is available at the Public Ethics Commission’s [Lobbyist Dashboard and Data](#) webpage.

Advice and Engagement

The Commission’s Advice and Engagement Program seeks to ensure Oakland public servants, candidates for office, lobbyists, and City contractors understand and comply with City campaign finance, ethics, and transparency laws.

Advice and Technical Assistance – In the months of January 2025 and February 2025, Commission Staff responded to 24 requests for information, advice or assistance regarding campaign finance, ethics, Sunshine law, or lobbyist issues.



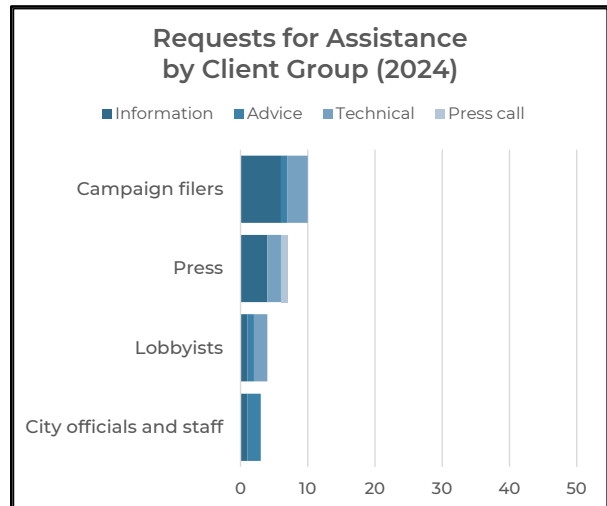
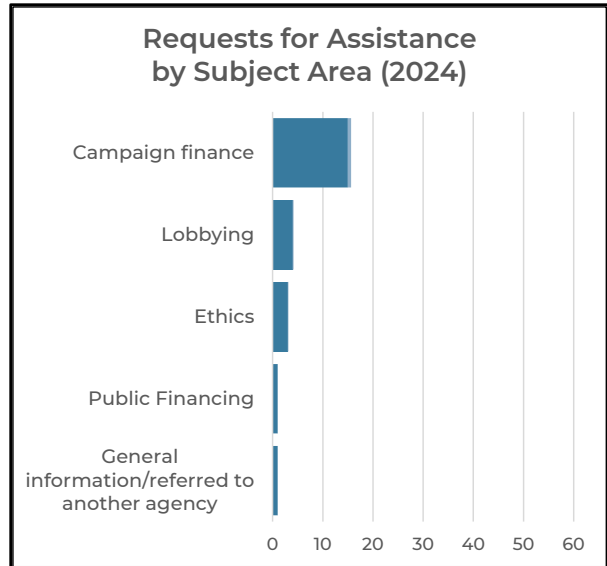
New Employee Orientation – Commission Staff continues to make presentations at the City’s monthly New Employee Orientation (NEO) providing new employees with an introduction to the Public Ethics Commission and overview of the Government Ethics Act (GEA).

In the months of January and February, Commission Staff provided an overview of the City’s ethics rules to 41 new City employees. Employees required to file Form 700 disclosure statements were also assigned the Commission’s mandatory online Government Ethics Training for Form 700 filers.

Supervisor Academy – On January 23, 2025, staff facilitated an ethics discussion for the City’s quarterly Supervisory Academy. The discussions are intended to allow for more meaningful dialogue concerning ethical values in decision making with a focus on identifying ethical dilemmas that City staff face in carrying out their daily duties. Commission Staff provided an overview of the Government Ethics Act including conflicts of interests, gift restrictions, and postemployment restrictions. A total of 27 employees attended the training.

Ethics Check-Ins – Commission Staff has been conducting ethics check-ins with individual City councilmembers and their staff to provide an overview of the Commission and its work and to share information about recent changes in both local and state ethics and transparency laws. Topics covered include gift rules, changes to the Lobbyist Registration Act, social media disclaimer requirements, changes to the state’s Levine Act regarding limitations on campaign contributions to local elected officials from certain parties and disqualifications based on past campaign contributions, and future outreach opportunities.

Check-ins allow Commission Staff to better understand the support needs of elected officials and their staff in complying with local ethics laws. Commission Staff also shared about ethics training requirements and provided a link to the PEC’s ethics resource binder. So far, Commission Staff has met with the following Council offices:



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- Council President Gallo
- Councilmember Kaplan
- Councilmember Brown
- Councilmember Unger

PEC Advisories – As part of our continuing education efforts, Commission Staff issues routine advisories to ensure that stakeholders subject to the laws under the PEC’s jurisdiction are aware of local rules impacting them. In January and February, Commission Staff sent out the following seven advisories:

Date	Targeted Group	Advisory Topic
1/1/2025	Campaign Filers	Reminder about January 31, 2025 Semi-Annual Report filing deadline.
1/15/2025	Lobbyist Filers	Reminder about January 31, 2025 Quarterly Report filing deadline.
1/15/2025	Campaign Filers	Notification of Start of 24-Hour Reporting Period on January 15
1/17/2025	City Staff and Officials	Reporting Rules for Behested Payments
1/23/2025	Campaign Filers	Special Election Filing Schedule
2/25/2025	City Staff and Officials	Election-season guidance for City staff
2/27/2025	Campaign Filers	Avoiding Common Filing Errors

Limited Public Financing (LPF) Program – The final deadline for LPF participants that received public financing during the November 2024 election to return any surplus funds to the City was January 31, 2025. Under the Limited Public Financing Act, candidates who participated and had a remaining cash balance (less any outstanding debts) as of December 31, 2024, were required to return a portion of the funds to the City by January 31. Only one LPF participant was required to return surplus funds in the amount of \$248.20, and they met the deadline.

Publications – Commission Staff updated the PEC’s comprehensive guide to the Oakland Campaign Reform Act, designed to assist the regulated community in complying with local campaign finance laws. The Guide was updated to reflect recent changes to the City’s contribution limits.

Online Engagement

Social Media – In January 2025 and February 2025, Commission Staff continued producing monthly social media content, including six posts highlighting PEC meetings, new contribution limits, PEC advisories, and the City’s budget workshops.