

How to File Financial Reports Online

A Handbook for Candidates & Committees



How to File Financial Reports Online: An Handbook for Candidates & Committees

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Contents

What's shown in an online financial report?	1
What do I need to file reports online?	2
How do I start?	3
What you see when you log in	.4
Let's look at the current reporting period	.5
About those command buttons	6
How do I view and maintain contributions?	.7
Adding a new contribution is easy	.8
Adding expenditures is a similar process	.9
Want to see how the report is adding up? Just do a preview	11
How do I import data from my campaign application?	.13
Finished entering all data? Then submit the report	15
Let's look at a submitted report	17
My county also requires a printed report	.18
When will my report appear on the elections website?	19
How do I save a copy of the report on my computer?	21
What about changing a report that's already been filed?	.22
How to I change or delete an item on the original report?	.24
What if I don't have any contributions or expenditures for the period?	26
Why are some reports locked?	.28
How do I export data to a spreadsheet?	29
What reporting is required at campaign end?	.30
How do I enter a photo and biographical info?	32
How do I change my password?	.36
Don't forget to log out!	37

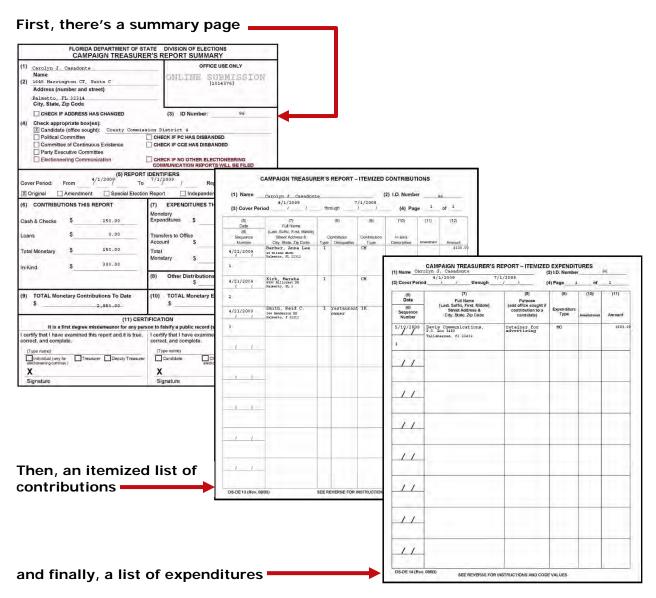
What's shown in an online financial report?

As you know, Florida law requires that candidates and political committees file quarterly reports with the Supervisor of Elections. These reports detail all contributions received and expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate/committee. The **Voter Focus** Candidate Financial Reporting System gives campaign treasurers an easy way to complete and file these required reports online.

Each report generated by the Candidate Financial Reporting System is a PDF file that can be viewed in Adobe® Acrobat® Reader. The PDF can be printed if your county requires hard-copy as well as online filing. Or you might want to keep a printed copy for your own records.

Once a report is accepted by the Supervisor of Elections, it will appear on the elections website and can be viewed by the public. Along with the financial reports, you have the option of providing a short description (or "bio") of the candidate/committee and a photograph.

Here's an example of a quarterly report:



What do I need to file reports online?

A computer equipped with:

- An Internet connection.
- A web browser configured to accept cookies and with pop-up blockers disabled. In this document, the examples show use Internet Explorer.
- Adobe® Acrobat® Reader, which you will need to view and print your reports. If you don't have the Reader software on your computer, you can download it free of charge from:
 - a link in the Candidate Financial Reporting System (see page 12)

or

- www.adobe.com
- A printer, if your county requires you to file a hard copy of the report.

A candidate ID and password.

This will be provided to you by the elections office.

Candidates need a new ID each time they run for office, even when they are running for reelection. Committees also need a new ID for each election.

Committees of continuous existence typically are allowed to keep the same ID, but this varies from county to county. Some counties prefer to assign committees of continuous existence a new ID for each election.

Your county might have other requirements, so check with the elections office before you begin.

How do I start?

Log into the Candidate Financial Reporting System like this:

1 Type this web address into your browser:

https://www.voterfocus.com/ws/WScand/candidate_pb.php?county=<county>

replacing the text *<county>* with your county name. You can enter lowercase or uppercase letters...the letter case doesn't matter here.

For example, if your county is Holmes, you would enter: https://www.voterfocus.com/ws/WScand/candidate_pb.php?county=holmes

2 Press the **Enter** key on your keyboard or click the "go" icon in your web browser. You'll then see the Candidate Log In page:



3 Enter your candidate ID and password here.

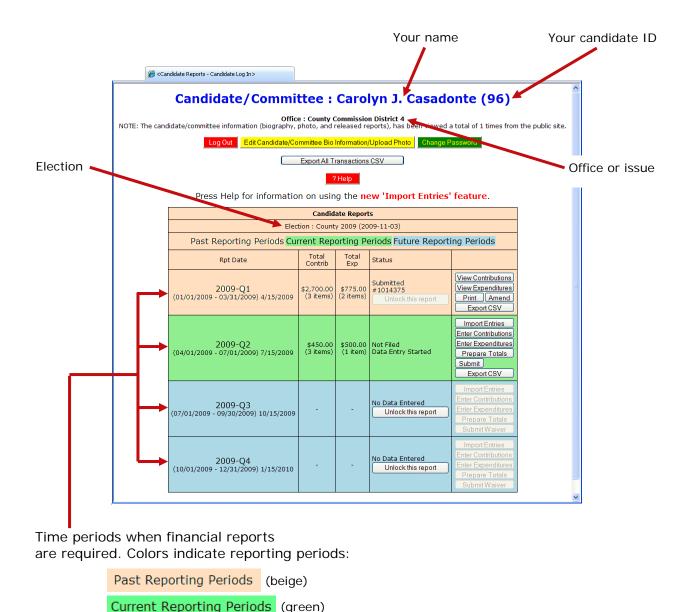
The password is case-sensitive. That means you have to enter the password in exactly the form given to you by the elections office: if a letter is uppercase, you must enter it in uppercase; the same goes for lowercase letters. Your password might also have numbers.

By the way...you can change your password once you get on the system. We'll explain how to do this on page 36.

4 Click Login

What you see when you log in.

This is the main page of the Candidate Financial Reporting System. It shows the reporting periods for the campaign. We call this page the *Report List*.



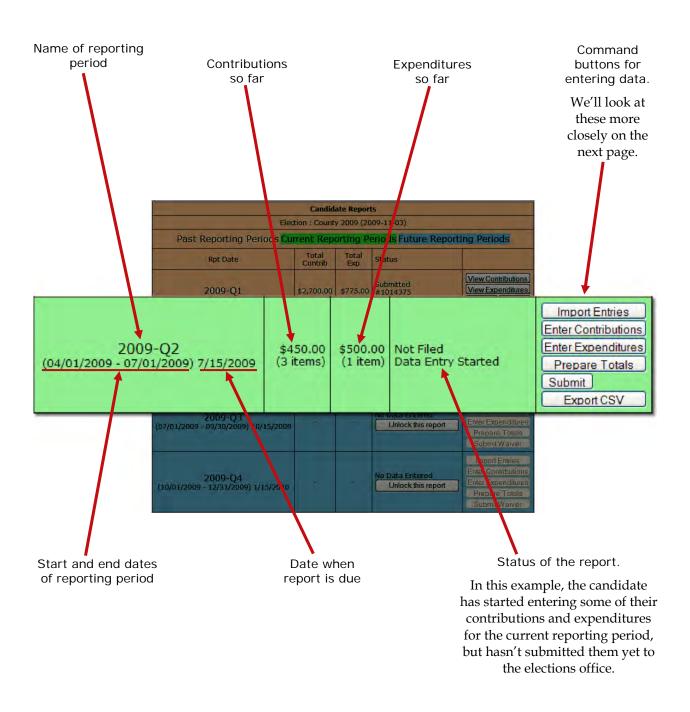
The reporting periods are color-coded to help you choose the correct period for reporting data.

Future Reporting Periods

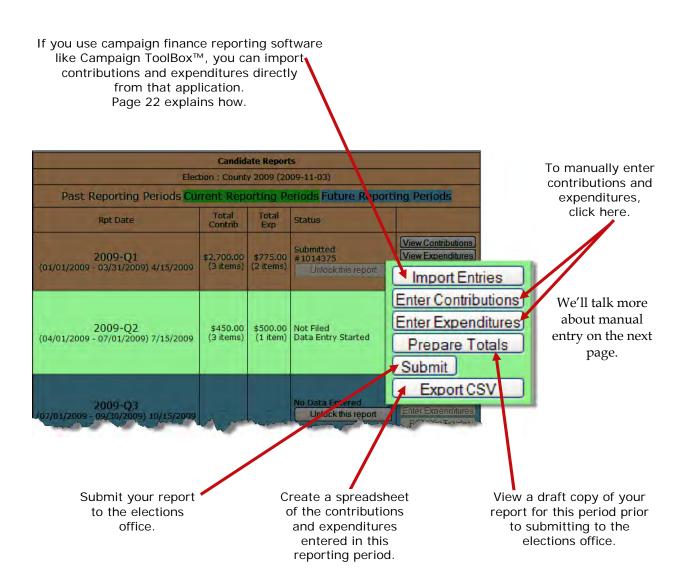
The past and future reporting periods are locked to prevent you from inadvertently entering current data into a past or future report. If you need to enter past or future data, you can easily unlock the report by clicking Unlock this report.

The colors of the reporting periods switch automatically at midnight on the due date of the current report.

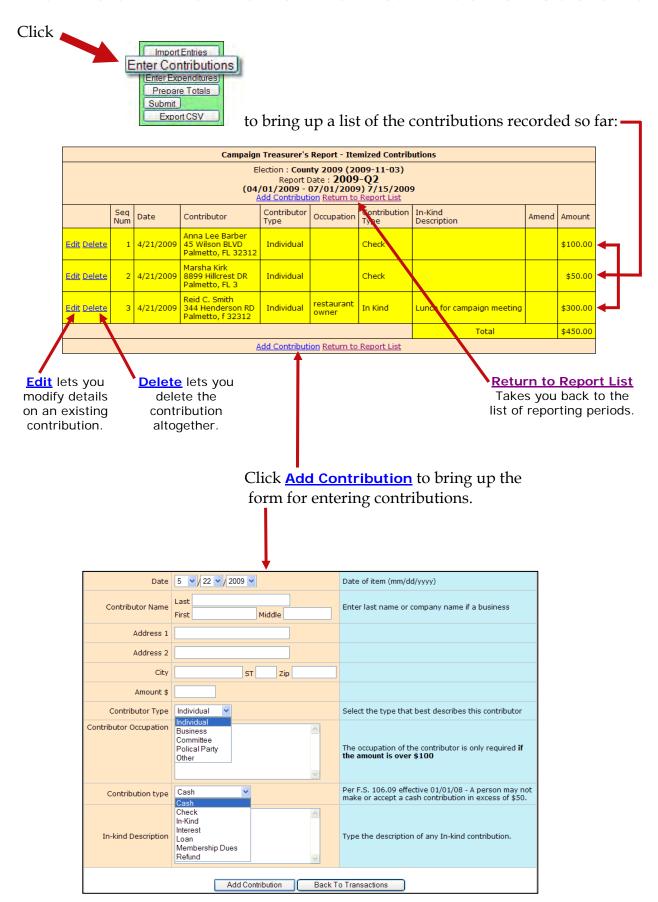
Let's look at the current reporting period.



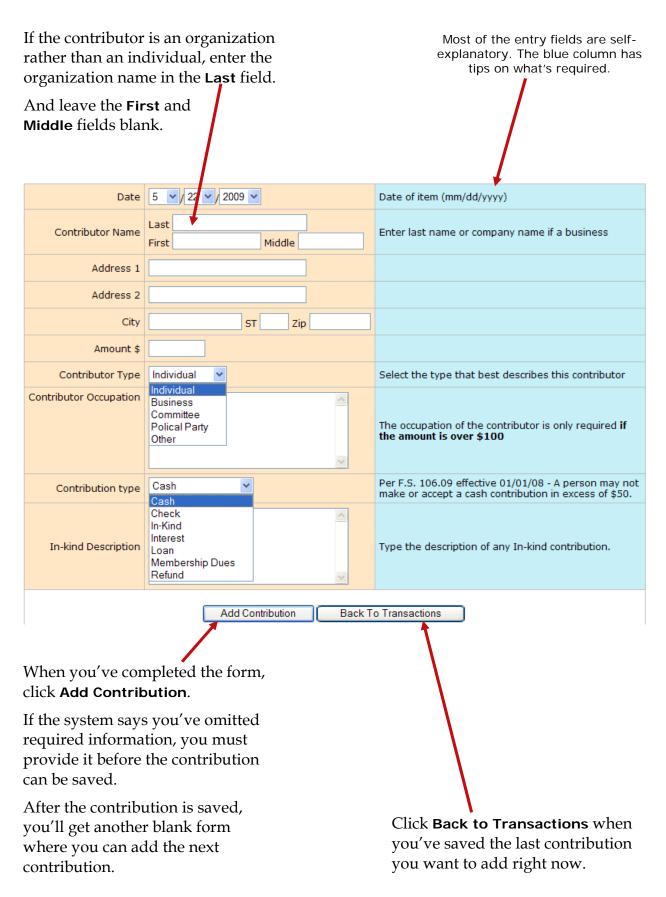
About those command buttons...



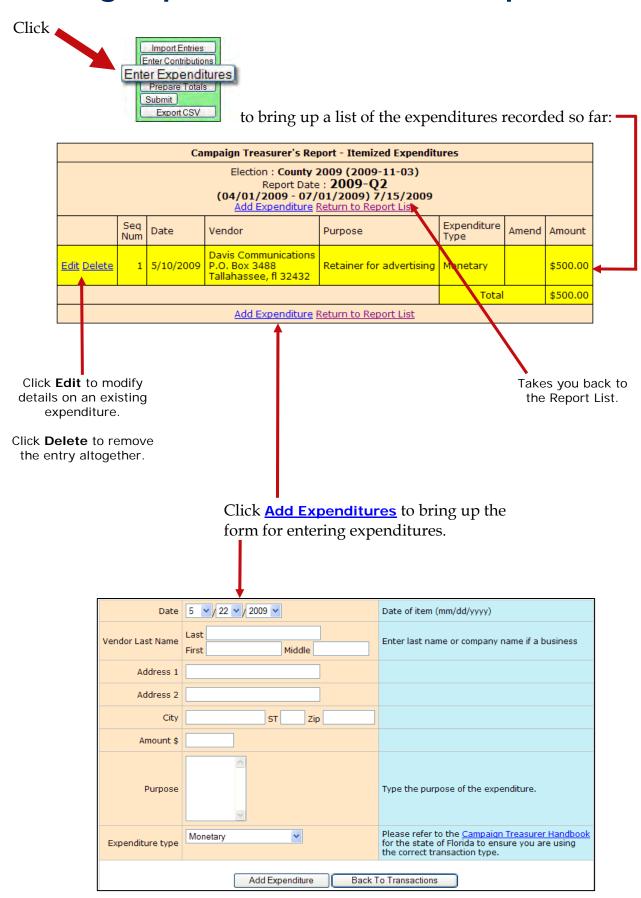
How do I view and maintain contributions?

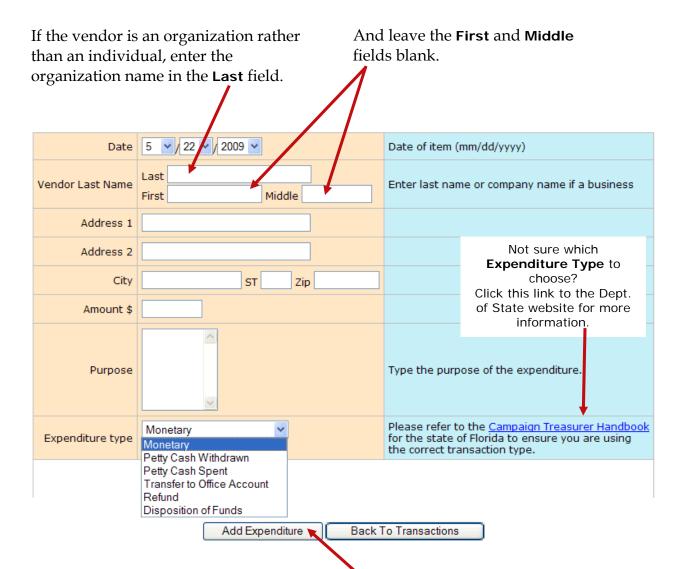


Adding a new contribution is easy.



Adding expenditures is a similar process.





About Petty Cash

In *Expenditure Type*, notice that there are two types for petty cash:

- Use Petty Cash Withdrawn when withdrawing funds from the campaign account for petty cash. This will add an expenditure of the entered amount to your report.
- Use Petty Cash Spent to record an expense out of petty cash.

Petty Cash Spent does not add an expenditure to the report because the expenditure was already recorded as Petty Cash Withdrawn.

It's important to keep accurate petty-cash records so your final report will balance.

When you've completed the form, click **Add Expenditure**.

After the expenditure is saved, you'll get another blank form where you can add the next expenditure.

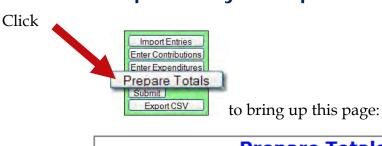
Click **Back to Transactions** when you've saved the last expenditure you want to add right now.

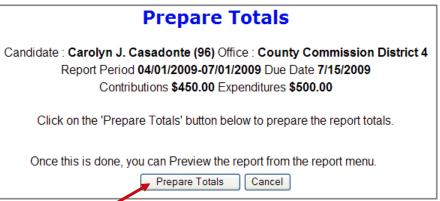
Want to see how the report is adding up? Just do a preview.

Previewing of reports isn't required. But it's a good idea to preview the report before you submit it, to catch any data entry errors, missing transactions, or other anomalies. Once a report has been submitted, it cannot be changed.

You can preview a report as many times as you like, make changes, and then preview it again until you are confident it is correct and complete. Before you do a preview, you must first total the items in the report.

To total and preview your report so far:



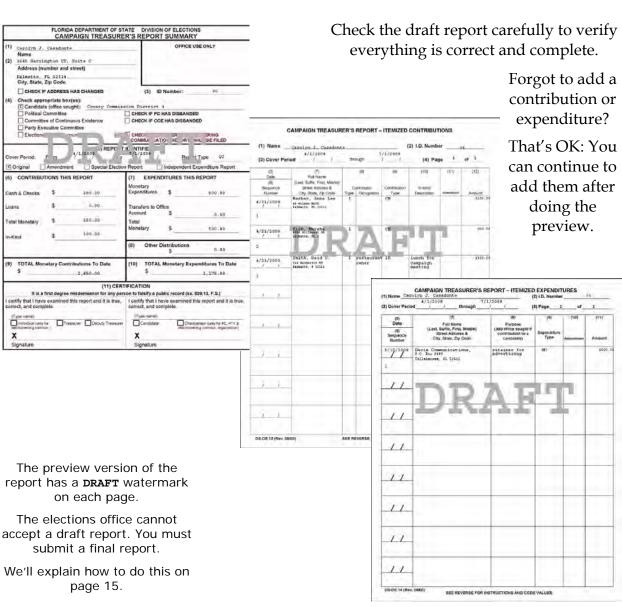


Click Prepare Totals to total the contributions and expenditures for this reporting period. You'll be returned to the Report List:



Notice that the **Prepare Totals** button is now labeled **Preview**.





How do I import data from my campaign application?

Candidates or committees using campaign finance reporting software such as Campaign ToolBox TM can import contribution and expenditure data from a file created by the application directly into the Candidate Financial Reporting System.

Import File Requirements

The system can import any file that meets the Division of Elections Campaign Finance Reporting File Specification:

http://doe.dos.state.fl.us/candidate/filing-campaign-reports.shtml#fileSpec

For a list of State-approved software vendors for electronic filing, see:

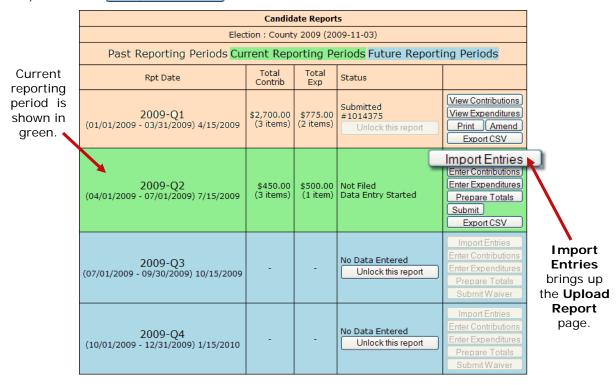
https://doe.dos.state.fl.us/candidate/filing-campaign-reports.shtml#software

When you import data from a file, the contributions and expenditures are added to the report you are working in. Be sure to review the report prior to submission to verify the data matches what you intended to import, and make any adjustments manually.

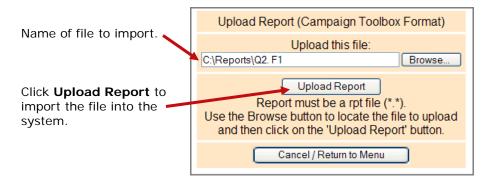
Don't worry if you happen to import the same file more than once. The system will import only the transactions it doesn't already have. It won't duplicate existing transactions.

To import data for the current reporting period:

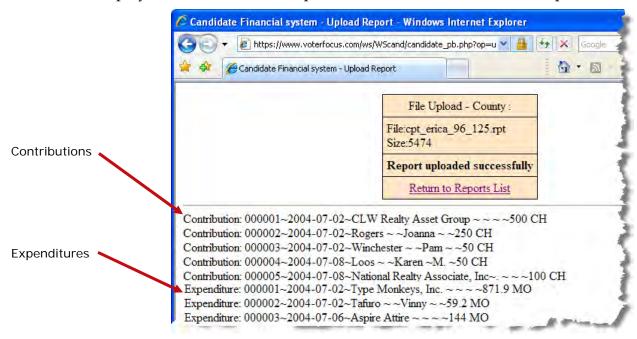
On the main page, locate the row for the current reporting period (look for the green row) and click Import Entries.



On the **Upload Report** page, click **Browse**... and find the file you want to import. Then click **Upload Report**.



You'll see a display of the transactions imported from the file, as in this example:



When you've finished importing entries for the reporting period, preview and submit the report as described in pages 11 through 17.

To import data for a past reporting period:

If you've already submitted the report for the past reporting period, you'll need to unlock it and create an amendment. Then you'll need to unlock the amendment and do an Import Entries command, following the instructions beginning on page 13.

To import data for a future reporting period:

Unlock the reporting period and do an Import Entries command, following the instructions beginning on page 13.

Finished entering all data? Then submit the report.

IMPORTANT

Make sure you have entered ALL contributions and expenditures correctly *before* you click **Submit Report**.

Clicking **Submit Report** closes the report.

Once you have done this, the report cannot be changed, although it can be amended. We'll look at amendments on page 22.

What happens when you submit a report:

- Removes the DRAFT watermark from the report pages.
- Seals the report: you cannot add, change, or delete contributions or expenditures once you have submitted the report.
- Files the report online with the elections office. Some counties require you to also provide with elections office with a signed hard copy of the report before your filing is considered complete.

To finalize the report:



to bring up instructions:

Submit Report

Candidate: Carolyn J. Casadonte (96) Office: County Commission District 4
Report Period 04/01/2009-07/01/2009 Due Date 7/15/2009
Contributions \$450.00 Expenditures \$500.00

Click on the submit button below to file the report.

Once a report is filed it **cannot** be changed. Any changes must be made as amendments to the original report.

Submit Report Cancel

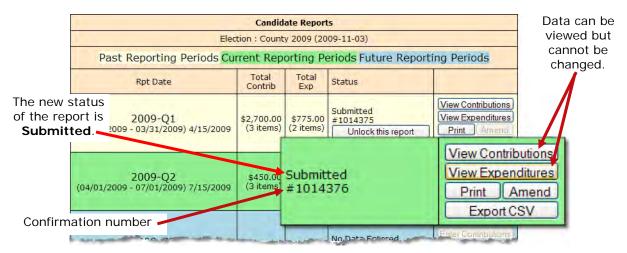
Are you certain your data for this reporting period is final?

If not, click **Cancel**.

If you are sure you are ready to file, click S

Clicking Submit Report returns you to the Report List.

Notice that the report's status is now **Submitted**. You'll also see a confirmation number. And, the command buttons have changed.



At this point, the report is closed, but it has not been sent to the elections office, even though its status is **Submitted** and a confirmation number has been assigned. To create a PDF of the report and sent it to the elections office, you click **Print**. You need not actually print or display the PDF, but you must click **Print** in order for the report to go to the elections office.

To create a PDF of the report and send it to the elections office:

Click

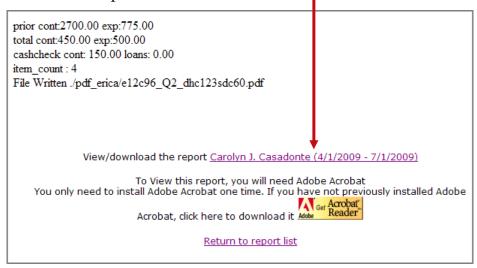
View Contributions
View Expenditures

Print mend

Export CSV

to bring up the page shown below. This is all you need to do to send the report to the elections office.

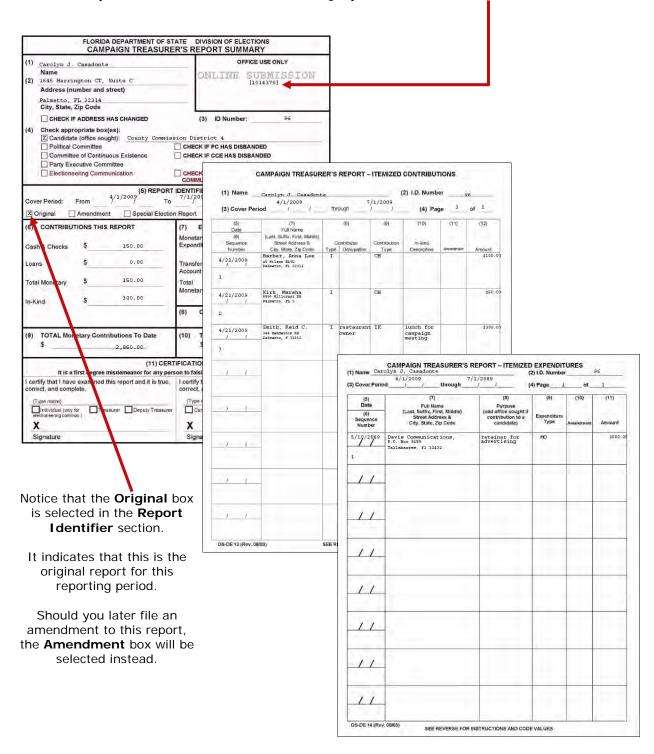
If you want to view the report, click here:



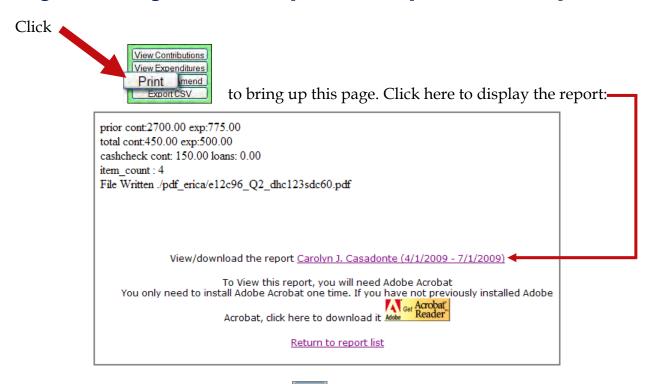
Let's look at a submitted report.

The DRAFT watermarks are gone...

and your confirmation number is displayed in the Office Use Only box.



My county also requires a printed report.



In Acrobat Reader, click the print icon: [10]. You'll find it in the upper-left corner of the screen.

Select your printer and click **OK**. The report will print

After printing the report, click (it's in the upper-right corner of the window displaying the report) to return to the Report List.

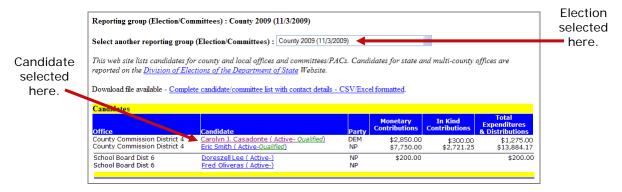
Sign the report and deliver it to the elections office prior to the deadline for this reporting period.

When will my report appear on the elections website?

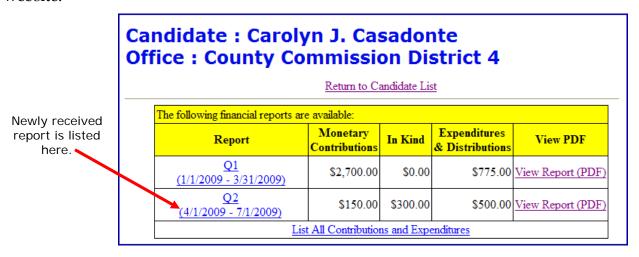
That depends on your county's procedures. Most counties reserve the right to review reports before releasing them to the public. Typically, when the report status changes to **Received**, the report is available on the website, but this can vary, so check with your county to find out what you can expect.



To get to your candidate page, website visitors select your name from the list of candidates running in a selected election. (The elections office will explain how to navigate to this list—it varies by county.)

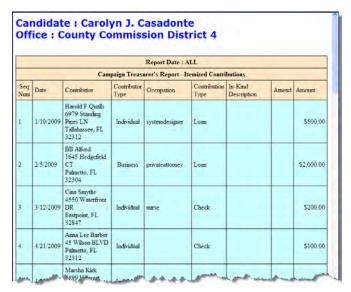


Your candidate page will list all reports that the elections office has released to the website:



Did you know?...A photograph and biographical information can also appear on your page, if you choose to provide them. We'll explain how to do this on page 32.

Website visitors can click <u>View Report (PDF)</u> to see the report in PDF format or <u>List All Contributions and Expenditures</u> to bring up a list of all transactions reported so far:



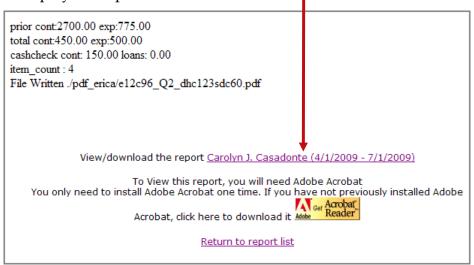
How do I save a copy of the report on my computer?

A copy of all the reports you file will continue to be available on the Candidate Financial Reporting System. But if you want to keep a copy on your local computer, just save the PDF to a folder on your computer or network.

To save copy of the report to your computer:



Click here to display the report:



Click . Save the PDF to a location on your computer or network. You might consider giving the copy a different file name: names assigned by the system are cryptic.

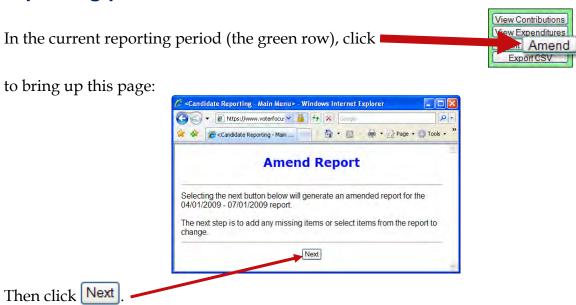
What about changing a report that's already been filed?

After a report has been submitted to the elections office, you cannot change it, but you can make an amendment. An amendment is a separate report for the reporting period. On the amendment's first page, you'll see a checkmark in the **Amendment** box.



You can amend a report any time after you submit it. When the original report's status is **Submitted**, you can add new contributions and expenditures, but you cannot change data on the original report. To change original data, the original report's status must be **Received**.

To create an amendment to a report in the current reporting period:



When the Report List reappears, notice that there's Candidate Reports Election: County 2009 (2009-11-03) now a new row Past Reporting Periods Current Reporting Periods Future Reporting Periods for the current Rpt Date reporting period. View Contributions Submitted #1014375 2009-Q1 - 03/31/2009) 4/15/2009 \$2,700.00 (3 items) \$775.00 (2 items) View Expenditures Unlock this report Print Export CSV View Contributions 2009-Q2 (04/01/2009 - 07/01/2009) 7/15/2009 View Expenditures Received #1014376 Print Amend
Export CSV Import Entries Enter the new Enter Contributions Enter Expenditures Not Filed Data Entry NOT Started data using these (04/01/2009 Prepare Totals Submit buttons, just like Export CSV you did on the

To create an amended report, you can:

- Manually enter new contributions (page 7) and expenditures (page 9).
- Import new contributions or expenditures (page 13).

2009-Q3

• Change or delete items listed on the original report (page 24).

The totals of items on the amended report are displayed just as they were for the original report.



No Data Entered

When you are finished entering items, preview the report (page 11) and submit it to the elections office (page 15). You'll see a new confirmation number for the amendment.



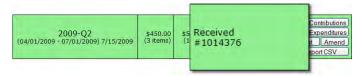
If your county requires a hard copy of amended reports, print the report (page 16), sign it, and deliver it to the elections office.

If you need to change a report after submitting the amendment, talk to the elections office. Some counties require a second amended report. Other counties have different procedures.

original report.

How to I change or delete an item on the original report?

First, verify that the status of the original report is **Received**:

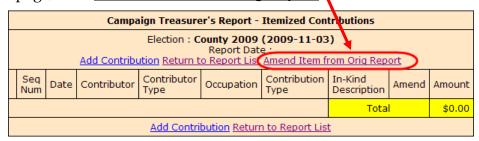


To change data that was entered on the original report, the original report's status must be **Received**.

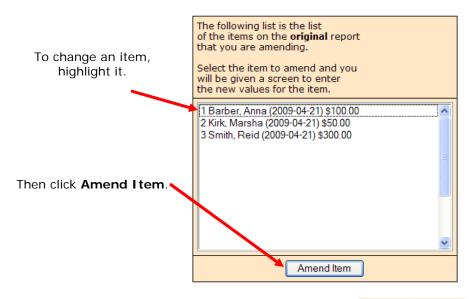
To change a contribution or expenditure:

On the Report List, locate the row for the amended report and click **Enter Contributions** or **Enter Expenditures**, depending on the type of item you want to change. In the example here, we are changing a contribution.

On the next page, click **Amend Item from Orig Report**.

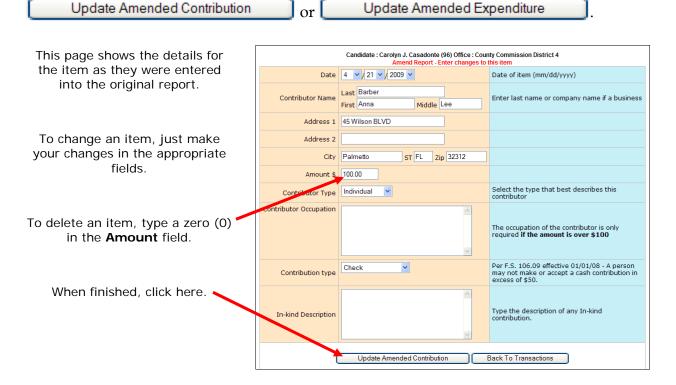


to bring up a list of items (for example, contributions) reported in the current quarter:



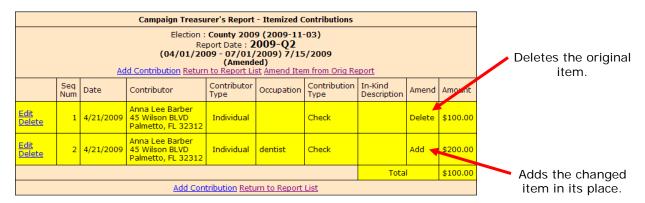
Highlight the item you want to change and click Amend Item to bring up the detail page for the item.

Type the changes where they are needed. If you want to delete the contribution or expenditure, simply zero-out the **Amount** field. When you've finished, click



On the next page, you now have two entries (in yellow) representing the changed item:

- The first entry deletes the item as it was filed in the original report. (Notice the word **Delete** in the **Amend** column.)
- The second entry adds the item with the changed values. (Its Amend column says Add.)



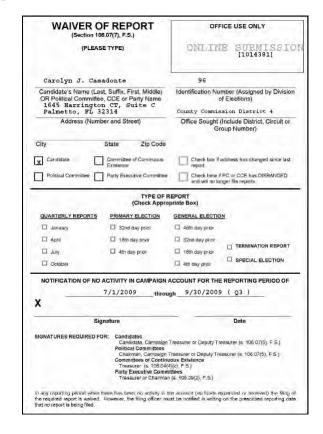
In the example here, we changed the contribution amount from \$100.00 to \$200.00 and added the contributor's occupation, as required by law for contributions over \$100.

This completes the change to the original item. From here you can change another item, add a new item, or return to the Report List.

What if I don't have any contributions or expenditures for the period?

You must submit a Waiver of Report.

A waiver is a one-page report that you print, fill out, and submit to the elections office.



To submit a waiver:

On the Report List, find the reporting period you want to submit a waiver for.



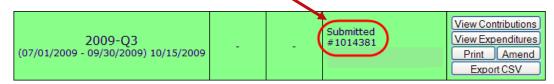


You'll return to the Report List, where you can see the confirmation number at the top of the page:

Report Submission Confirmed: #1014381

Candidate/Committee: Carolyn J. Casadonte (96)

and the status of **Submitted** for the report:



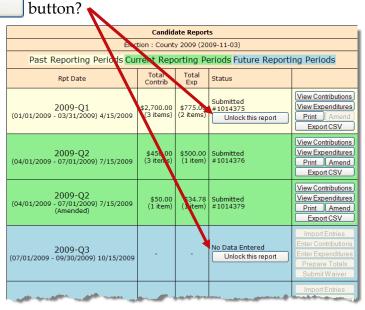
Click Print display the Waiver of Report, and print it out.

Some of the fields on the waiver are completed for you, but you will need to review it carefully and complete any fields that are not filled out. Then deliver the report to the elections office prior to the reporting deadline.

Waivers can be amended, just like any other report. So if you later discover you had contributions or expenditures for a reporting period, simply amend the waiver as you would amend any report (page 22).

Why are some reports locked?

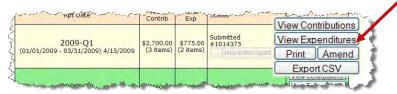
Have you noticed that reports for past and future reporting periods have an Unlock this report



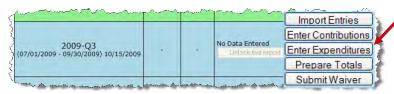
These buttons prevent you from accidentally entering data for the current reporting period into a past or future period.

If you find that you need to amend a past report or enter data for a future report, click Unlock this report

For past reporting periods, you'll then get command buttons for amending the report.



And for future reporting periods, you'll see the usual buttons for entering data.



How do I export data to a spreadsheet?

The system has two ways to export your financial data to a Microsoft Excel commaseparated values (.CSV) file:



collects all data for the selected report.



collects all data from all reports in this election.

Both options create a file named **CFinExport.csv** in your C:\Temp folder.

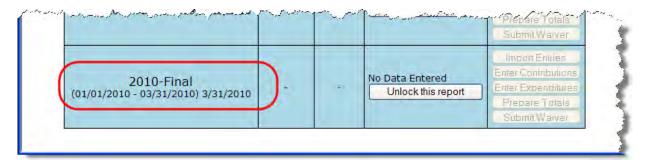
When you click either button, you'll see a message asking if you want to open or save the file. You can view the file immediately or save it to a different name and location, if you like.

The spreadsheet file contains this information:

- Date the item was recorded
- Whether it's a contribution (C) or an expenditure (E)
- Contributor or vendor name and address
- Contribution type
- Contributor's occupation
- Item type
- Description
- Amount
- Whether the item was recorded in the original report (blank) or an amendment (A)

What reporting is required at campaign end?

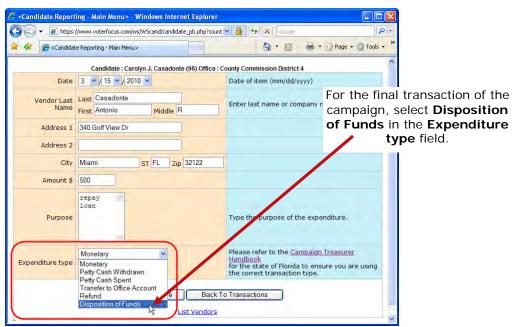
On the Report List, you will see a section for the Final or Termination report. This report states the financial status of your campaign after all contributions and expenditures have been reconciled. The final report might not appear at the beginning of the campaign, but the elections office will add it to your reporting dates at the appropriate time.



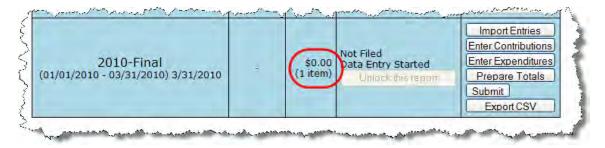
When it's time to file the report, its row will turn green.

To file this report, you will first need to add any outstanding contributions and expenses. The last item should be a single expenditure that disposes of any excess funds in your campaign account.

When you enter this last expenditure, be sure to select **Disposition of Funds** for the **Expenditure type**.



When you return to the list of expenditures for the final report, you will see the item listed, but the amount will not be reflected in the total expenditures for the period. Nor will the amount be included on the Report List—in the **Total Exp** column—although it will be counted as an "item." This design is in accordance with Division of Elections requirements.

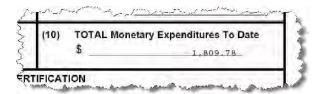


Preview the report and submit it as you have previous reports for the campaign.

When you look at the report, notice that the Disposition of Funds amount is not reflected in box 7 of the Report Summary page.

(7) EXPENI	DITURES THE	REPORT
Monetary Expenditures	\$	0.00
Transfers to Of Account	fice \$	0.00
Total Monetary	\$	0.00

But the amount will be included in box 10 of the Summary Report.

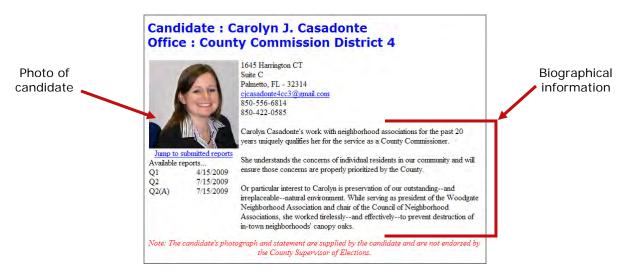


And it will appear on the Itemized Expenditure page with an expenditure type of DI.



How do I enter a photo and biographical info?

You can place a JPEG file, such as a photo, and descriptive text on the page that voters see when they visit the Candidate Financial system.



A photo and text about the candidate or committee are nice to have, but they are not required. If f you don't provide them, here is what voters will see:



The item in the photo area need not be a photograph. Committees might prefer to show their logo instead. But the file placed in this area must be a JPEG file. That is, the file's 3-character file extension must be .JPG.

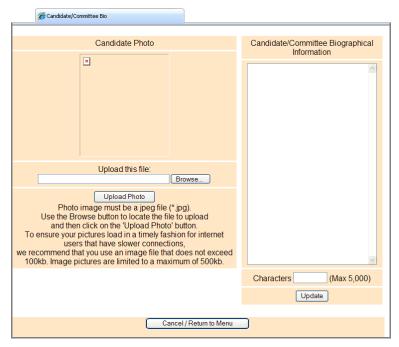
The system won't accept a JPEG file that's larger than 500 KB. It's best to use an even smaller file if you can, because smaller files display more quickly to website visitors than large ones, especially if a visitor has a slow Internet connection.

To enter a photo:

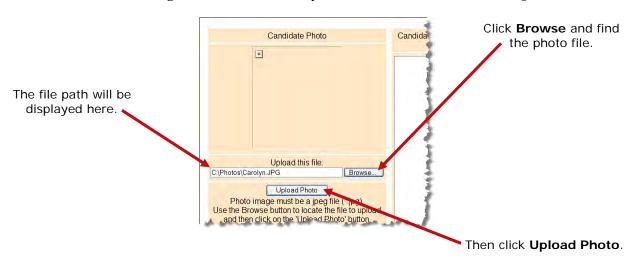
On the main page, click the yellow button.



to bring up the Candidate/Committee Biopage:



Click **Browse** and navigate to the JPEG file you want to use. Then click **Upload Photo**.



When the file has copied to the system, you'll see this message along with the photo file:



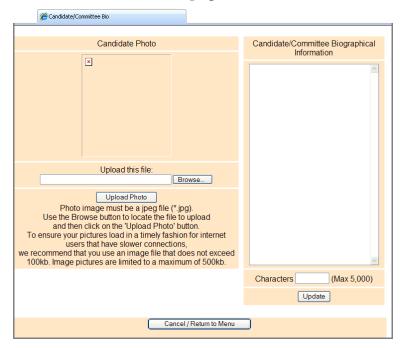
Click <u>Return to Main Menu</u> to return to the main page of the system.

To enter candidate or committee text:

On the main page, click the yellow button.

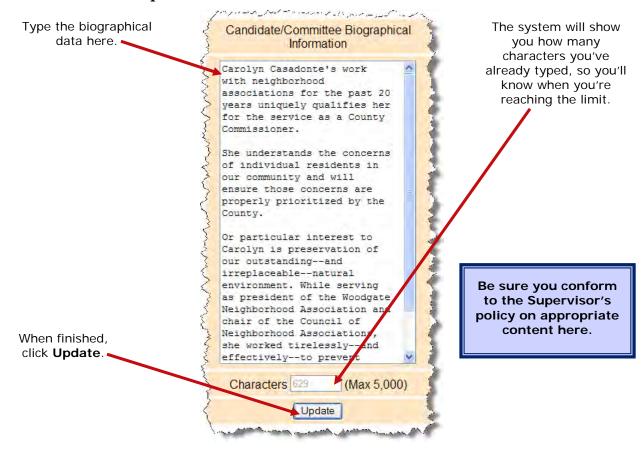


to bring up the Candidate/Committee Biopage:



In the **Candidate/Committee Biographical Information** pane, type the information you want to display to voters. You can enter up to 5,000 characters. The system will show

you—in the **Characters** box—how many characters you have typed so far. When you are finished, click **Update**.



If you ever want to change the photo or bio, just return to the Candidate/Committee Bio page and upload a different photo or edit the bio text.

To see how your photo and bio appear to voters, enter this address in your web browser, replacing *county*> with your county name:

https://www.voterfocus.com/ws/WScand/candidate_pr.php?c=<county>

You might not see your photo and bio immediately. Your county might reserve the right to review your information before it is released to the public on their website. Check with the elections office for your county's policy on this.

How do I change my password?

You can change the password assigned to you by the elections office, if you like. A password can be any combination of letters and numbers.

To change your password:



In the **Enter Old Password** field, enter your current password. Then enter your new password in the other two fields. Click **Change Password** when you are finished.



From now on, you will log on with your new password. Keep in mind: if you set up the Candidate Log In page to automatically fill in your password, you will need to retype the password there the next time you log in. When you do, you might see this message:



Simply click **Yes** to proceed into the Candidate Financial Reporting system.

Should you forget your new password, contact the elections office. They will be able to retrieve it for you.

Don't forget to log out!

When you are finished with a session on the Candidate Financial Reporting System, be sure to log out so that unauthorized persons cannot modify your report data.

To log out of the system:

On the Report List, click Log Out

