



## The FEC's Electronic Filing Site, Part I: A guided tour.

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The 2002 election cycle will be the first in which the FEC is requiring House candidates, PACs and party committees to file their reports electronically. (Senate candidates still file the old fashioned way for now.) So what does this mean for reporters? It means better, more timely data.

This is the new homepage for the electronic filing site ([herndon2.sdrdc.com/dcdev/](http://herndon2.sdrdc.com/dcdev/)). Here, you can search for committee and candidate filings by any number of means -- committee ID, by name, state, party and the type of committee.

The screenshot shows the 'FEC Electronic Filing Report Retrieval' search page. It includes a search bar for 'Committee ID' with the value 'C'. Below it are dropdown menus for 'Postal Name of Candidate/Committee', 'State (Select at least as appropriate)' with options 'ALL', 'ALASKA', 'ALABAMA', 'ARIZONA', and 'Party Designation (Select at least as appropriate)' with options 'ALL', 'AMERICAN INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVE', 'AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY', and 'AMERICAN PARTY'. There is also a dropdown for 'Committee Type (Select at least as appropriate)' with options 'ALL', 'COMMUNICATION COST', 'DELEGATE', and 'HOUSE'. A 'Report Type' dropdown is set to 'Data Filed'. At the bottom are 'Send Query' and 'Clear Form' buttons, and a 'WARNING!' message.

Punch in a committee name -- let's search for "Hastert" -- and hit send query.

The following FEC filings are sorted by Committee name and then by date filed.

<a href="#">HASTERT FOR CONGRESS COMMITTEE - C00208090</a>		
<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>	FEC-52837 Form F3N - period 02/28/2002-03/31/2002, filed 04/15
<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>	FEC-29773 Form F6N - filed 03/15/2002 - 48 HOUR NOTICE
<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>	FEC-29548 Form F6N - filed 03/13/2002 - 48 HOUR NOTICE
<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>	FEC-29548 Form F6N - filed 03/13/2002 - 48 HOUR NOTICE

The next page you will get will give you a listing of all committees matching the name "Hastert," the full name of the committee, the committee ID (in this case, C00208090), and then a listing of all the forms filed by this committee.

You can view the data two ways: Online, or by downloading the data to your local computer. This handout only deals with viewing the forms online.

Click on "view" and you will be taken to a series of pages that are electronic replications of the paper filing. It is always a good idea to have a copy of the federal form handy as you look over these numbers, because it's not quite as clear as the hard copy forms used to be.

Anyone who has worked with campaign finance data before will be familiar with the first two pages- the summary and detailed summary. Just like the paper forms, it shows sources of contributions and expenditures for the reporting period (Column A) and the entire cycle (Column B). On the detailed summary, under "III Cash Summary," you'll see grand totals for the period and the total cash on hand, which is always an important number to know.

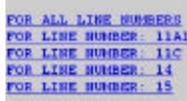
III. CASH SUMMARY	
23. Cash On Hand At Beginning Of Reporting Period	723986.94
24. Total Receipts This Period (line 16)	616430.01
25. Subtotal (23 + 24)	1340416.95
26. Total Disbursements This Period (line 22)	547438.35
27. Cash On Hand At Close Of The Reporting Period (25 - 26)	792978.60

Scroll to near the top of the form, and you will find a series of links to detailed schedules.



The schedules match the paper form, so schedule A will always be itemized receipts, schedule B will be itemized expenditures, and so forth. Again, it's good to have a copy of a blank form with all the schedules handy when you go through these filings.

Click on schedule A, and now you will see why it's valuable to have a blank form handy. When viewing the reports online, you can see all the different types of contributions, or look at them broken down by individual line item.



What this doesn't tell you is what the line items mean. To figure this out, refer to the federal Form 3, on page 3 under detailed summary. Line number 11A1 is individual contributions, and 11C are PAC contributions.

Click on the line item you're interested in viewing -- let's say, line item 11A1, individuals -- and it will search through the filing and pull out those items only. Depending on your internet connection and the size of the report, this can take a little while. This is what an itemized contribution looks like:

Contributor's Name Contributor's Address	Employer	Date	Amount (\$)
	Occupation	Memo	Aggregate (\$)
Memo/Description		Text	
Amer. Acad. of Dermatology Assoc. PAC P. O. Box 4014 Schaumburg, Illinois 60168		09/13/2001	2000.00
			2000.00
	Receipt		

Again, anyone who has worked with campaign finance reports in the past will be quite familiar with the layout. All the information required by law should be there -- the contributor's name and address, their occupation, employer, contribution date, amount and total amount contributed to the campaign so far. These schedules can be printed or saved to your local computer. Look for the "save as" and "print" commands under your browser's File menu.

OK, so that's great, what are the downsides?

For one, you can't do any special analysis on the numbers when viewing them online. There's no way to sort by contributor name, or occupation, or employer. There's no way to group individuals together -- say, all individuals who list their employer as Enron.

In order to do that, you'll have to download the raw data and do the analysis yourself.