BOARD MEMBERS:

DISTRICT 1 - Dom Zanger

DISTRICT 2 - Kollin Kosmicki

DISTRICT 3 - Mindy Sotelo

DISTRICT 4 - Angela Curro

DISTRICT 5 - Ignacio Velazquez

**Agenda Item
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Supervisors
Tuesday, December 16, 2025**

Website:
www.sanbenitocountyca.gov

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:
Esperanza Colio Warren

COUNTY COUNSEL:
Gregory Priamos

CLERK OF THE BOARD:
Vanessa Delgado

Item Number: 3.3

MEETING DATE: 12/16/2025

DEPARTMENT: COUNTY COUNSEL

AGENDA ITEM PREPARER: Rebekah Mojica

DEPT HEAD/DIRECTOR: Gregory Priamos

SUBJECT:

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
1. Accept Introduction and Waive Further Reading Of "An Ordinance Of The San Benito County Board of Supervisors Establishing Campaign Disclosure Requirements and Contribution Limits, and Amending Lobbying Definitions and Enforcement," and continue to January 13, 2026 For Adoption.
2. Provide feedback and direction to staff, if desired.
SBC FILE NUMBER: 160
ORDINANCE NO.:1089

AGENDA SECTION:

REGULAR AGENDA

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:

This item is before the Board for consideration of a proposed ordinance establishing a local campaign finance framework for San Benito County, to promote transparency, accountability, and public confidence in local elections.

In 2019, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 571, which became effective January 1, 2021, amending the Political Reform Act of 1974 (Government Code §§ 81000 et seq.) to establish default campaign contribution limits for city and county candidates in jurisdictions that had not enacted their own limits. Under AB 571, local jurisdictions without specific limits were subject to the same contribution limits applicable to state Senate and Assembly candidates, while retaining the ability to adopt their own, prevailing limits at any time.

Prior to the passage of AB 571, the County of San Benito did not have local campaign contribution limits, consistent with the majority of California counties. While the Political Reform Act provided baseline disclosure requirements, it did not fully address local concerns regarding transparency, fairness, and public confidence in County elections.

In response to these considerations, Supervisors Kosmicki and Zanger brought forward a future agenda item proposing the enactment of a $1,000 contribution limit per election starting in 2026, with $100 escalators every four years; reporting requirements for all contributions of $25 or more, and exploring mechanisms to increase transparency around expenditures. A majority of the Board subsequently authorized staff to move forward with bringing the item back for consideration.

The purpose of this ordinance is to promote transparency and public trust in County elections, limit the influence of large contributions and the appearance of undue influence, ensure equitable access to the political process for all candidates and voters, enhance efficiency and accessibility through electronic filing of campaign statements with searchable public access, and provide clear enforcement mechanisms, including administrative and criminal penalties for violations.

The ordinance also amends provisions related to lobbying in Article XI of Chapter 3.01. It updates definitions for clarity and consistency with proposed Article XII, aligns administrative enforcement procedures for lobbying—including penalties and appeals—with campaign disclosure enforcement to improve compliance monitoring, and clarifies the separate nature of lobbying activities and campaign disclosure and contribution limits along with their related requirements.

The ordinance adds Article XII to Chapter 3.01, establishing County-specific campaign disclosure and contribution limits while maintaining compliance with the Political Reform Act. Key provisions of Article XII include electronic filing of campaign statements and reports, establishment of local contribution limits with rules for loans, transfers, and expenditures, reporting requirements for contributions before and after elections (including carryover contributions), administrative penalties and appeal procedures for violations, and criminal enforcement for knowing and willful violations.

Together, these provisions strengthen transparency, accountability, and consistency for County elections while providing clear, enforceable standards for candidates, committees, and lobbyists.

An earlier draft of the proposed ordinance was presented to the Board on November 18, 2025. At that meeting, the Board directed staff to amend the ordinance by increasing the limit from $1,000 to $2,500 and removing Section 3-01.174(F). These revisions are incorporated into the updated draft now before the Board.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The adoption of this ordinance is anticipated to have minimal fiscal impact on the County. Implementation primarily involves:
- Staff time for oversight by the Registrar of Voters.
- Costs associated with electronic filing system maintenance.
- Administrative enforcement of campaign disclosure and lobbying provisions.

By shifting filings to an electronic format, the County anticipates reductions in paper processing costs, printing, and storage, providing a net efficiency benefit over time. There is no anticipated significant cost increase for County departments or programs beyond routine oversight and compliance monitoring.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors:
1. Accept Introduction and Waive Further Reading Of "An Ordinance Of The San Benito County Board of Supervisors Establishing Campaign Disclosure Requirements and Contribution Limits, and Amending Lobbying Definitions and Enforcement," and Continue to January 13, 2026 For Adoption.
2. Provide Feedback and Direction to Staff, If Desired.

ATTACHMENTS:
Board Agenda Fact Sheet -Lobbying Ordinance
Ordinance 1089 - SBC Campaign Finance
Ordinance - SBC Campaign Finance (With Tracked Changes)
Redline changes to Lobbying Article
Future Agenda Items Request Form Campaign Finance