

A Reporter's Guide to Campaign Finance Research in Illinois

This document is intended as a shortcut guide to news reporters researching campaign finance data using the Illinois State Board of Elections website, but should be beneficial for anyone examining financial records pertaining to Illinois elections.

Users of this guide will learn to quickly perform searches of political committees and download search results into spreadsheets for further sorting and analysis.

The Board of Elections has been publishing the financial records of all types of political committees on its website since 1998. The site also includes itemized contribution records for committees of legislative and constitutional officer candidates from mid-1994 onward. The agency's digital archive of annual and semiannual committee reports extends to the late 1980s, though these records do not include itemized contribution or expenditure reports. (Itemized reports that predate the online archive are catalogued on microfiche and can be obtained by contacting our <u>public information officer</u>.)

TYPES OF SEARCHES

There are multiple ways of searching financial information on the Board of Elections website, but in the vast majority of cases, reporters who are following an election race, candidate, referendum or independent expenditure committee will obtain the best results by using a committee number as the basis for searches.

There are exceptions – such as when searching for all contributions to multiple committees by a contributor's name, or all campaign expenditures paid to a specific vendor – and those will be covered at the end of this guide.

While the SBE website allows for some basic onscreen sorting of search results, the most efficient way to work with results is by downloading them into a spreadsheet and using the spreadsheet's sorting and filtering functions. Because the website generally limits online display of search results to the first 5,000 items, downloading has the added benefit of delivering complete results regardless of their number.

Another advantage to searching by committee number concerns reporting requirements for contributions of \$1,000 or more. A committee is required to report these contributions within five business days or within two business days if received within 30 days of an election in which the committee is involved. Knowing how to access up-to-the-minute contribution information will keep you apprised of these contributions as they are reported right up to Election Day (as opposed to waiting until they are reported in the next quarterly report).

STEP 1: COMMITTEE SEARCH

The first thing you'll need to do is find the committee number of the committee you're researching. On the <u>Board of Elections homepage</u>, locate and click on the committee search function by hovering over the Press Room tab at the top of the homepage and clicking "Committee Search" in the upper left portion of the drop-down menu:

Information For Voters	Campaign Disclosure	Running for Office	Candidate Filing and Results	Business Registration	Press Room				
ampaign Disclosure		Search		Noteworthy [Data and Information				
Liedonstanding Compaign Lisclosure		Business Registration		Number of Registered Voters					
Committee Search		Candidate Disclosure Complaint		Misc					
Expenditures Search		Contribution Limits O			ses and Board Related Material				
andidate Filings		Find My Elected Offic	als	Brochures					
		Election Authorities		Fines Due					
Latest Filed		Independent Expend	ture	Uncounted Ballots					
Reports Filed		Officer		Latest Com	Latest Committee Totals				
Daily Totals		Registration Lookup		Referenda					
Candidate Filing Search		Self Funding Candida	te		ittee Totals				
lection		Statewide Question		Contact Infor	mation				
Election Authorities Contact Information		Submitter		Media/FOI#	Requests				

Select "contains" from the Committee Name drop-down menu and enter either the last name of the candidate whose committee you are researching or, in the case of other types of committees, a portion of the committee's name. This example uses the campaign committee of former Gov. Jim Edgar. Click "search."

		Committees Only
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	Address:	Starts with
	City:	Contains Starts with V
	State:	Select a State V
	Zip Code:	Thru:
1	Committee ID:	
33	Committee Type:	Select A Type V
		Search Reset

This generates a list of all committees containing your search term. For this example, the appropriate result is Citizens for Jim Edgar. Clicking the link of a committee name on this list will display the committee's date of establishment, purpose, officers and its most recent reports. That information will be useful in many cases, but for this example we simply want to know the committee's committee ID number, which is 110. Now that we have that number, we can move on to the next step.

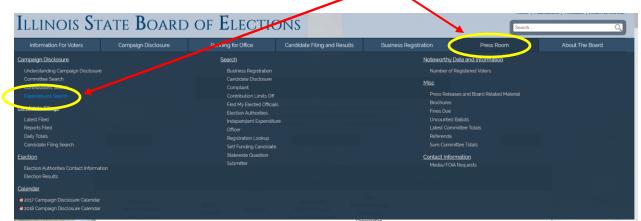
Committee Name	Address	Status	CommitteeID
Business Persons For Edgar	John Bickley Jr, Chairman 230 N Michigan Ave Chicago, IL 60601	Final	5339
Citizens for Jim Edgar	PO Box 747 Savoy, IL 61874-0747	Active	110
Citizens for William Edgar	PO Box 34 Wheaton, IL 60187-0034	Final	21419
Citz For Edgar S.C.C.	19 Persimmon Ridge Belleville, IL 62223	Final	6681
Edgar County Democrat Boosters	c/o Mike Morris 507 W Washington St Paris, IL 61944-1673	Active	13199
Edgar County Democratic Central Cmte	c/o Stephanie Standish 5261 N 125th St Kansas, IL 61933-6154	Active	590
Edgar County Republican Central Committee	James H Mathis, Sec/Treasurer 513 S Central Ave Paris, IL 61944-2108	Active	5247
Educators For Edgar In Champaign County	2006 Bruce Urbana, IL 61801	Final	6680
German Americans For Gov Jim Edgar	C/O Irene Rotter, Treas 2019 W Summerdale Chicago, IL 60625	Final	10555
Interested Citizens For Edgar	900 S Durkin Dr # 2 Springfield, IL 62704	Final	6638
First Prev 12 Next Last Page Size 10 🗸		15 Total Records	

STEP 2: CONTRIBUTIONS/EXPENDITURES SEARCH

Now that we have the Committee ID number, we can run search for all contributions to or expenditures by this committee. To search contributions, hover your cursor over the Press Room tab then select "Contributions Search" in the upper left portion of the drop-down menu.

Illinois St	TATE B OAF	RD OF ELEC	TIONS		Home Publ
Information For Voters	Campaign Disclosure	Running for Office	Candidate Filing and Results	Business Registration	Press Room
Campaign Disclosure Understanding Campaign Disclosure		Search Business Registration			y Data and Information of Registered Voters
Contributions Search		Candidate Disclosure Complaint		Misc	
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Candidate Filings Latest Filed		Election Authorities Independent Expenditi			ed Ballots
Reports Filed Daily Totals		Officer Registration Lookup		Referenc	
Candidate Filing Search <u>Election</u>		Self Funding Candidate Statewide Question		Sum Cor <u>Contact In</u>	nmittee Totals f <u>ormation</u>
Election Authorities Contact Information Election Results		Submitter		Media/F	OIA Requests
<u>Calendar</u>					Martin Californi
2017 Campaign Disclosure Calendar 2018 Campaign Disclosure Calendar	Mind for Elizable				HESTER MILLING

To search expenditures, hover over Press Room and select "Expenditures Search" from the drop-down menu.



We'll use a contributions search for the rest of this example, but the process is identical for expenditures searches.

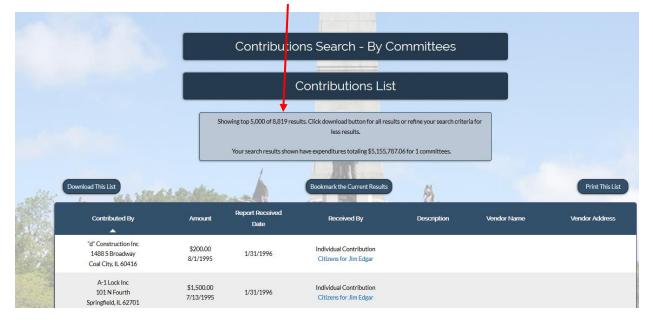
When the Contributions Search page appears, click the "By Committees" tab. This will open a window containing a committee ID field at the bottom. Type the committee ID number here and click search.

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	Contributio	ns Search - By Committees
	By All Contributions By Candidate By Committees	y Proposition
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	First Name:	Starts with V
	Address:	Starts with V
	City:	Starts with V
	State:	Select a State 🗸
	Zip Code:	Thru:
	Occupation:	Starts with V
	Employer:	Starts with V
	Amount:	Thru:
	Contribution Received Date:	m/d/yyyy Thru: m/d/yyyy
	Report Received Date:	m/d/yyyy Time: V
2.250	Tiru:	m/d/yyyy Time: V
(Ra	Description:	Starts with V
3.	Committee Name	Contains V
	Committee ID:	110
		Search Reset

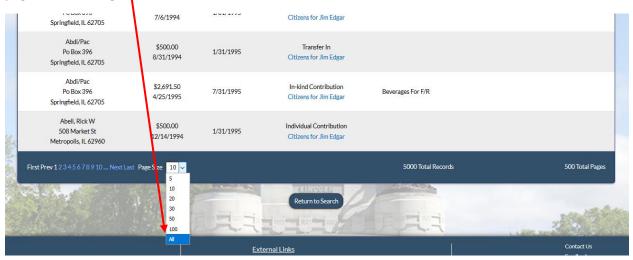
If you are only searching within a certain time period, you can limit your search by entering a date range in the "Contribution Received Date" fields. Likewise, if you are looking for a specific contributor to a committee, fill in the name fields. You can further refine your search by entering details into the various other fields.

We're leaving those fields blank in this example because we want to see all the committee's contributions.

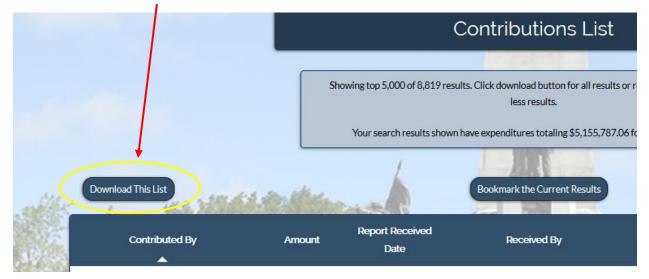
The resulting search tells us the number and sum of total contributions and offers options for viewing the results. Note that this search returned 8,819 results, but the website can only display 5,000 results.



You may choose to view up to 5,000 results online by using the dropdown menu at the bottom of the page and selecting "all."



To obtain all results in a search of any size, use the download option. Doing this will let you store your results and allows for greater analysis of data using the sort, filter and other functions in a spreadsheet. Start by clicking "Download This List."



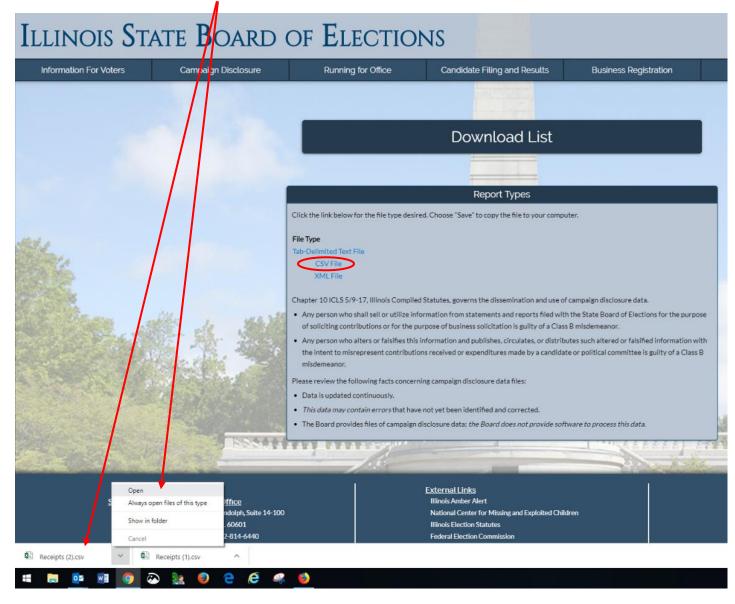
The next screen will give you options for how you want to download your results.

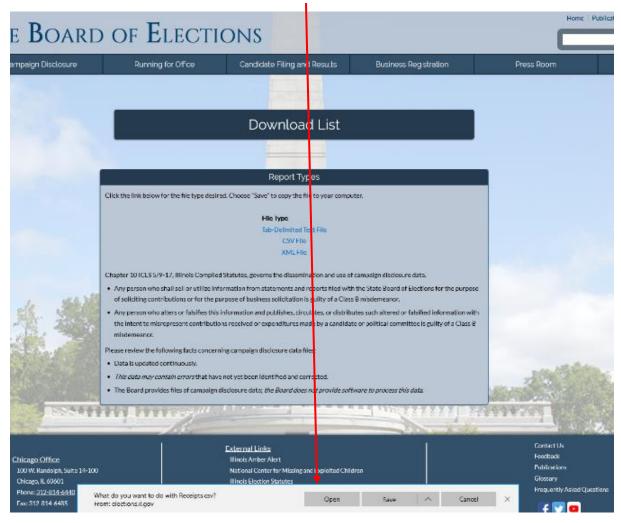
	Download List
	State State
	Report Types
4	Click the link below for the file type desired. Choose "Save" to copy the file to your computer.
	File Type
	Tab-Delimited Text File
	CSV File
	XML File
(Chapter 10 ICLS 5/9-17, Illinois Compiled Statutes, governs the dissemination and use of campaign disclosure data.
	 Any person who shall sell or utilize information from statements and reports filed with the State Board of Elections for the purpose of soliciting contributions or for the purpose of business solicitation is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.
	 Any person who alters or falsifies this information and publishes, circulates, or distributes such altered or falsified information with the intent to misrepresent contributions received or expenditures made by a candidate or political committee is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.
1	Please review the following facts concerning campaign disclosure data files:
	Data is updated continuously.
	This data may contain errors that have not yet been identified and corrected.
	The Board provides files of campaign disclosure data; the Board does not provide software to process this data.

The type of file you choose for your download will depend on which spreadsheet application you will be using. If you use an online spreadsheet such as Google Sheets, skip to the next section, "Online Spreadsheets."

For most users, choosing CSV File (comma-separated values file) will be the simplest option, as it allows for single-step downloading and opening. In most browsers, clicking CSV File will automatically download a file in a tab at the bottom of your browser window from which it can be opened in your system's default spreadsheet program. Here's a look at how the most common browsers display these downloads.

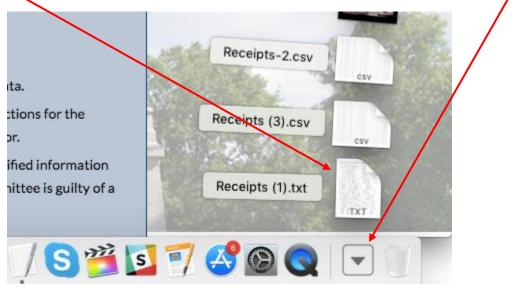
In Google Chrome, clicking CSV file places your download at the bottom the browser window, with a pop-up menu from which it can be opened:





Microsoft Edge and Explorer display downloads as shown here.

Using the Mac Safari browser, the downloaded file is automatically sent to the downloads folder in the dock in the lower right portion of the screen, where it can be opened by clicking the icon and then the file:



Firefox users will see a variation on this window with an option to open the file:

	Opening Receipts.csv	×
Click the link below for the file	You have chosen to open: Receipts.csv which is: Microsoft Excel Comma Separated Values File from: https://elections.il.gov	
Tab-Delimited Text File CSV File XML File	What should Firefox do with this file? ©Open with Microsoft Excel (default) Save File	
Chapter 10 ICLS 5/9-17, Illinoi Any person who shall sell or of soliciting contributions o	Do this gutomatically for files like this from now on.	lata. ections for the purpose
Any person who alters or fa the intent to misrepresent comisdemeanor.	OK Cancel	Isified information with
Data is updated continuously	s concerning campaign disclosure data files: that have not yet been identified and corrected.	

Regardless of which browser you are using, select "open" and your CSV file will open in a spreadsheet.

(You can use this same process to search and download a committee's expenditures. Just repeat the steps above but choose <u>"Expenditures Search"</u> from the Press Room dropdown menu in Step 2.)

If you are using an online spreadsheet such as Google Sheets, the process is slightly different.

ONLINE SPREADSHEET

The simplest way to move your results into an online spreadsheet involves copying and pasting using the Tab Delimited Text File option. When you click Tab Delimited Text File, the download process is identical to the one described above.

Download List
Report Types
Click the link below for the file type desired. Choose "Save" to copy the file to your computer.
File Type
Tab-Delimited Text File
CSV File
XML File
Chapter 10 ICLS 5/9-17, Illinois Compiled Statutes, governs the dissemination and use of campaign disclosure data.
• Any person who shall sell or utilize information from statements and reports filed with the State Board of Elections for the purpose of soliciting contributions or for the purpose of business solicitation is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.
• Any person who alters or falsifies this information and publishes, circulates, or distributes such altered or falsified information with the intent to misrepresent contributions received or expenditures made by a candidate or political committee is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.
Please review the following facts concerning campaign disclosure data files:
Data is updated continuously.
This data may contain errors that have not yet been identified and corrected.
• The Board provides files of campaign disclosure data; the Board does not provide software to process this data.

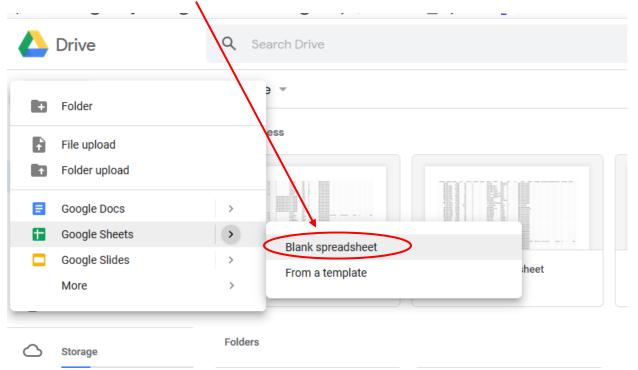
Here, however, opening the file will reveal a window full of text that you will copy and paste into a blank sheet (we'll use Google Sheets in this example as it's the most common online spreadsheet).

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Press control-A (command-A on a Mac) to select all the text, then press control-C (or command-C) to place it on your clipboard. Selected text will look like this:

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(Note: The copy-paste method can also be used to place data into any blank spreadsheet or to add data to an existing sheet.)



Now open a new, blank Google Sheet using the dropdown menu on your Google Drive homepage:

When the new sheet appears, click control-V (command-V on a Mac) to paste your results into the sheet. (This may take some time if, as in this example, your search contains a large number of results.)

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	110 A-1 Lock In				0		101 N Fourth		Springfield	L		Individual Cor					
	110 A-1 Lock In				0		101 N Fourth		Springfield	L		Individual Cor					
	110 A-1 Lock In				0		101 N 4th		Springfield	L		Individual Cor					
	110 A-1 Lock In				0		101 N 4th At W		Springfield	L		Individual Cor					
	110 A-1 Lock In				0		101 N 4th At W		Springfield	L		Individual Cor					
	110 A-1 Lock In				0		101 N 4th At W		Springfield	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Aai/Campbe				0		No 1 Design Me		Collinsville	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Aai/Campbe				0		No 1 Design Me		Collinsville	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Aai/Campbe				0		No 1 Design Me		Collinsville	IL.		Individual Cor					
	110 Aaic Inc	10/28/19			0		No 1 Design Me		Collinsville	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Aaic Inc	5/13/19			0		No 1 Design Me		Collinsville	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Abator Infor				0		7207 Beacon Hi		Pittsburgh	PA		Individual Cor					
	110 Abator Infor				0		7207 Beacon Hi		Pittsburgh	PA		Individual Cor					
	110 Abbey Deve				0		1400 S Wolf Rd		Wheeling	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Abbey Man				0		570 Lake Cook	Rd Ste 404	Deerfield	IL.		Individual Cor					
	110 Abbott Hou:				0		405 Central Av		Highland Park	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Abbott Labo				0		1 Abbott Park R		Abbott Park	IL		Individual Cor					
	110 Abbott Labo				0		One Abbott Pk	R Po Box 177	Abbott Park	L	60064-3500	Individual Cor	ntribution				
	110 Abc Pac	5/24/19			0		Rte 1 Box 255		Decatur	L		Transfer In					
	110 Abdi Pac	7/13/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	L		Transfer In					
	110 Abdi/Pac	10/26/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	L		Transfer In					
	110 Abdi/Pac	7/6/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	L		Transfer In					
	110 Abdi/Pac	8/31/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	L		Transfer In					
	110 Abdi/Pac	4/25/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	L			ibuti Beverages For F	/R			
	110 Abdi/Pac	7/16/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	L		Transfer In					
	110 Abdi/Pac	11/18/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	IL.		Transfer In					
	110 Abdi/Pac	8/2/19			0		Po Box 396		Springfield	L		Transfer In					Ċ.
	110 Abell, Rick				0		508 Market St		Metropolis	L		Individual Cor					
	110 Ac Paverne	t Str 10/20/19	94 50	0	0		3036 Orchard P		Desplaines	IL.	60018	Individual Cor	ntribution				

You can access a Google Sheet's basic sorting functions by clicking the arrow in a column heading. Be sure to name your sheet.

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	A	в 📼	C	D	
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2	110	d Construction In	8/1/1995	200	
3	110	d Construction In	5/3/1996	350	
4	110	A-1 Lock Inc	7/13/1995	1500	
5	110	A-1 Lock Inc	5/15/1996	500	
6	110	A-1 Lock Inc	5/16/1996	500	

OTHER COMMON SEARCHES

The process above is all geared toward researching the financial activity of a specific committee.

But often researchers want to find information about a single donor's overall contributions to multiple committees. Another frequent search involves expenditures paid to specific individuals or entities by multiple committees.

For these results, use the <u>"By All Contributions"</u> or <u>"By All Expenditures"</u> tabs.

	Contributior	ns Search - All Contributions
$\boldsymbol{<}$	By All Contributions By Ct Ididates By Committees	By Proposition
	Contribution Type:	All Types 🗸
	Last or Only Name:	Starts with V
	First Name:	Starts with V
	Address:	Starts with V
	City:	Starts with V
	State:	Select a State V
	Zip Code:	Thru:
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Expenditure	Expenditures Search - All Expenditures					
By All Expenditures By C3 tdidates By Committees	By Proposition					
Expenditure Type:	All Types V					
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First Name:	Starts with V					
Address:	Starts with V					
City:	Starts with V					
State:	Select a State V					
Zip Code:	Thru:					
Purpose:	Starts with V					
Beneficiary:	Starts with V					
Amount:	Thru:					
Date Expended:	m/d/yyyy Thru: m/d/yyyy					
Report Received Date:	m/d/yyyy Time:					
Thru:	m/d/yyyy Time:					
	Search Reset					

To find all contributions from a specific donor (above left), fill in as much information as necessary for your search (you can limit by date or amount, for example).

To find expenditures paid to specific vendors or individuals, do the same in an expenditures search.

Downloading results is the same process as described earlier.

In this example, we entered "McDonald" as the last name in an expenditure search and turned up 694 records. When we added "meal" to the "purpose" field of the search, our results were reduced to 201 records, all to McDonalds restaurants:

		Expe	enditure	es Search	- All Exp	penditures		
	By All Expenditures By Can	didates By	Committees	y Proposition			_	
		Exp	enditure Type:	All Types	~			
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1		-						
		1	Expe	enditure Searc	h Results			
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			Your	r search found expenditures tota	ling \$10,803.57.			
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	Received By	Amount	Report Received Date	Expended By	Purpose / Beneficiary	Candidate Name Office - District	upporting / Opposing	
	McDonalds 1664 s Blue Island Chicago, IL 60608	\$29.97 1/25/2019	4/15/2019	Expenditure 25th Ward Regular Democratic Organization	Meal 25th Ward Regular Democratic Organization			
	McDonalds			Expenditure	Meals			
	1664 s Blue Island Chicago, IL 60608	\$33.92 2/6/2019	4/15/2019	25th Ward Regular Democratic Organization	25th Ward Regular Democratic			
1					Organization			
1000	McDonalds 1664 s Blue Island	\$29.76 2/20/2019	4/15/2019	Expenditure 25th Ward Regular	Meals 25th Ward Regular Democratic			
ALC: NO	Chicago, IL 60608	2/20/2017		Democratic Organization	Organization			
- KANA	McDonalds 1664 s Blue Island	\$24.85	4/15/2019	Expenditure 25th Ward Regular	Meals 25th Ward Regular			
	Chicago, IL 60608	2/25/2019	4/15/2019	Democratic Organization	Democratic Organization	/		
Constant of	McDonalds			Expenditure	Meals			
C. Martin	1664 s Blue Island Chicago, IL 60608	\$11.99 3/20/2019	4/15/2019	25th Ward Regular Democratic Organization	25th Ward Regular Democratic			
					Organization	/		
					Meals			
	McDonalds 1664 s Blue Island	\$68.87 10/10/2018	4/2/2019	Expenditure 25th Ward Regular	Meals 25th Ward Regular Democratic			
	Chicago, IL 60608	20, 20/2010		Democratic Organization	Organization			
	First Prev 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Next Last P.	'age Size 10 ∨			201 T	Total Records	21 Total Pages	

HELPFUL HINTS

Bookmark links to specific kinds of searches (committee, contributions, expenditures) for quick access.

Bookmark results of searches you plan to revisit frequently. The bookmark option is displayed atop all search results.

-				
	Contributio	ns Search - By Co	ommittees	
	(Contributions List		
Show	ing top 5,000 of 8,819 resu	ults. Click download button for all result less results.	s or refine your search criter	iafor
	Your search results shown	have expenditures totaling \$5155,787	.06 for 1 committees.	
nelline,		Bookmark the Current Results		
Amount	Report Received	Received By	Description	Vendor Na

Be sure to name files you download or create online. This easily forgotten step can make a big difference when dealing with multiple committees over time.

For a basic understanding of campaign finance rules in Illinois, see the <u>Understanding Campaign</u> <u>Disclosure</u> page.

The campaign contribution limits for the 2020 election cycle are here.

For questions or help with using this guide or conducting campaign finance research, contact public information officer Matt Dietrich at <u>mdietrich@elections.il.gov</u> or (217) 558-1955.