

CAMPAIGN FINANCE DATA DOCUMENTATION

[Link for more info](#)

RecipCodes – just two characters, and so much information

Recipcodes are found in many campaign finance tables. They provide a quick way to select specific large groups. Here's how to "decode" the recipcode field:

For Candidates = <Party> + <Status>

For Cmtes:

- a) Party Cmtes = <Party> + P
- b) Outside spending Cmtes = O + <CmteBLIO>
- c) All other Cmtes = P+ <CmteBLIO>

- <Party>
 - "D" for Democratic, "R" for Republican, "3" for Independent, Libertarian or third party, "U" for Unknown
- <Status>
 - "W" for Winner, "L" for Loser, "I" for incumbent, "C" for Challenger, "O" for "Open Seat", and "N" for Non-incumbent. "N" is reserved for candidates that are neither in office nor running during the cycle in question.
- <CmteBLIO>
 - "B" for Business, "L" for Labor, "I" for Ideological, "O" for "Other" and "U" for unknown.

Party Cmtes = recipcode like _P

Non-party Cmtes = recipcode like p*

Problems when combining Indivs and PACs data – don't double count!

You do not want to include the money listed in the Indivs table going to PACs because it will show up again as contributions from the PAC. So, limit the money counted from Indivs:

```
Join Indivs to Cmtes on Indivs.CmteID = Cmtes.CmteID with  
Indivs.RecipCode not like P*
```

Note that this will exclude contributions to leadership PACs. If you want to include individual contributions to leadership PACs, do NOT exclude based on Recipcode. Instead, limit to where Indivs.Party is not null and Indivs.Party<>"" (does not equal blank.) Additionally, restrictions are required for the PAC to PAC data because if those PACs getting money from other PACs then turn around and give that money to candidates, that will also result in double counting. We do not fill in or standardize orname for contributions where recipient is a non-leadership PAC (in which case source is generally P/PAC). Those transactions are presumed to be representative of the recipient, and we want to count the money coming FROM those PACs, not the money going to those PACs (and we have to choose or we'll double count).

Calculate Top Contributors

Data to include: We calculate top contributors for House members using 2-year cycle data and for Senate members/candidates we calculate for a 6-year or 3 cycle period. So, for a Senate member/candidate who was also a senator and/or was raising money to run for that Senate seat during either of the two previous cycles, that data is counted, as well as the data for the cycle being calculated. For example, to calculate the top contributors in the 2008 cycle to Steve Kagen (WI08), use just the 2008 data (Indivs, PACs, Pac_other). But to calculate the 2008 top contributors to Ted Kennedy (MAS1), I would include his 2004, 2006 and 2008 cycle data. For someone who served in the House in 2004 and was elected to the Senate in 2006, calculating his 2008 top contributors, we'd only use his 2006 and 2008 data. Note that we now typically exclude money to presidential campaign committees for congressional candidate and member profiles. To exclude money to presidential campaign committees, link

Indivs.Cmteid to Cmtes.Cmteid and limit Cmtes.Feccandid to "Not like p*".

For most members and candidates this will not be necessary.

How to pick orname or ultorg: When calculating top contributors, it's important to select the display/calculating unit properly: the orname or the ultorg. In general, here's the rule: if the grouping unit (candidate, state, race, etc) has more than one distinct orname for any given ultorg, you list the ultorg with the total of the ornames. If an ultorg has but a single orname for a given group, you list the orname.

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1. fec_api_committees
[45,507 rows - 13 cols]
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['id', 'cid', 'created_at', 'updated_at', 'cycle', 'individual_unitemized_contributions', 'individual_
itemized_contributions', 'individual_contributions', 'designation', 'organization_type', 'name', 'comm
ittee_id', 'committee_type']
```

2. PACS TO PACS: [1,083,525 rows - 25 cols]

Field	Definition	Type	Length	Source
Cycle	Last year (even year) of the federal 2-year election cycle	Text	4	FEC
FECRecNo	A unique record identifier within a given cycle.	Text	19	FEC
Filerid	The committee id number for the PAC making the filing. Refers to donor if Type=2* or recipient if Type=1*.	Text	9	FEC
DonorCmte	The standardized name for the donor based on the name of the PAC's sponsor.	Text	50	CRP
ContribLendTrans	Reported name of the donor if Type=1* or the recipient if Type=2*.	Text	50	FEC
City	The donor's city. This could be based on a home address or an employer's address.	Text	30	FEC
State	The donor's state. This could be based on a home address or an employer's address.	Text	2	FEC
Zip	The donor's zip code. This could be based on a home address or an employer's address.	Text	5	FEC
FECOccEmp	The donor's disclosed employer and/or occupation.	Text	38	FEC
Primcode	The primary industry/ideological code for the donor PAC's sponsor.	Text	5	CRP
Date	The reported date of the contribution.	Date		FEC
Amount	The amount contributed. This will be negative for refunds.	Float		FEC
RecipID	The recipient's id number. If the contribution is to a candidate this will be the candidate's unique candidate id number. Otherwise, it will be the FEC committee id number.	Text	9	CRP
Party	The party (if any) of the recipient. "D" for Democratic, "R" for Republican, "I" for Independent, "L" for Libertarian, "3" for other third party and "U" for Unknown. This field will be blank or null for PACs other than leadership PACs.	Text	1	CRP
Otherid	Committee id for donor if Type=1* or recipient if Type=2*.	Text	9	FEC
RecipCode	A two character code defining the type of recipient. For candidates, the first character is party ("D" for Democratic, "R" for Republican, "3" for Independent, Libertarian or third party, "U" for Unknown.) The second character is "W" for Winner, "L" for Loser, "I" for incumbent, "C" for Challenger, "O" for "Open Seat", and "N" for Non-incumbent. "N" is reserved for candidates that are neither in office nor running during the cycle in question. For party committees, the first character is party and the second character is "P." For PACs, the first character is "P" and for outside spending groups, the first character is "O". For both, the	Text	2	CRP

	second character is "B" for Business, "L" for Labor, "I" for Ideological, "O" for "Other" and "U" for unknown.			
RecipPrimcode	The industry/ideological code for the recipient - codes beginning with Z1 are candidate committees, codes beginning with Z5 are party committees and codes beginning with J2 are leadership PACs.	Text	5	CRP
Amend	Whether the record comes from an amended report	Text	1	FEC
Report	The type of report - 1 st quarter, year end, etc.	Text	3	FEC
PG	Whether the contribution is for a Primary ("P") or General ("G") election.	Text	1	FEC
Microfilm	The FEC microfilm record for the contribution	Text	11	FEC
Type	The transaction type code for the contribution. 11 is a tribal contribution, 22Z is a contribution refund to a candidate or committee, 24G is a Transfer to an affiliated committee, 24K is a direct contribution, 24R is a election recount disbursement and 24Z is an in kind contribution	Text	3	FEC
RealCode	The standard five character code identifying the donor's industry or ideology. Usually based on Primcode. Sometimes a PAC sponsor will have secondary interests which may replace the main realcode depending on recipient. For example, Boeing is primarily Air Transport but has Air Defense interests. Thus Boeing contributions to members of the Armed Services committee would have a realcode of Air Defense.	Text	5	CRP
Source	Indicates how the Realcode was determined.	Text	5	CRP

3. INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS: [24,446,378 rows - 25 cols]

Field	Definition	Type	Length	Source
Cycle	Last year (even year) of the federal 2-year election cycle	Text	4	FEC
FECTransID	A unique record identifier within a given cycle.	Text	19	FEC
ContribID	A unique identifier for individual donors. Family groups match on first 11 chars	Text	12	CRP
Contrib	The name of the contributor, usually in the format Last name, First Name.	Text	50	FEC
RecipID	The recipient's id number. If the contribution is to a candidate this will be the candidate's unique candidate id number. Otherwise, it will be the FEC committee id number.	Text	9	CRP
Orgname	The standardized organization name for the contributor. This is usually based on the donor's employer. The donor may not have an income producing occupation (e.g. homemaker)	Text	50	CRP
UltOrg	The standardized parent organization for the organization listed in the Orgname field. If there is no parent identified, this field will be blank or null.	Text	50	CRP
RealCode	The standard five character code identifying the donor's industry or ideology. Usually based on Orgname (e.g., the orgname "Microsoft Corp" would normally get realcode C5120 for computer software.)	Text	5	CRP
Date	The reported date of the contribution.	MM/DD/YYYY		FEC
Amount	The amount contributed. This will be negative for refunds.	Integer		FEC
Street	2000+ cycle only, and only for committees that file electronically	Text	40	FEC
City	The donor's city. This could be based on a home address or an employer's address.	Text	30	FEC
State	The donor's state. This could be based on a home address or an employer's address.	Text	2	FEC
Zip	The donor's zip code. This could be based on a home address or an employer's address.	Text	5	FEC
RecipCode	A two-character code defining the type of recipient. For candidates, the first character is party ("D" for Democratic, "R" for Republican, "3" for Independent, Libertarian or third party, "U" for Unknown.) The second character is "W" for Winner, "L" for Loser, "I" for incumbent, "C" for Challenger, "O" for "Open Seat", and "N" for Non-incumbent. "N" is reserved for candidates that are neither in office nor running during the cycle in question. For party committees, the first character is party and the second character is "P." For PACs, the first character is "P" and the second character is "B" for Business, "L" for Labor, "I" for Ideological, "O" for "Other" and "U" for unknown.	Text	2	CRP
Type	The transaction type code for the contribution. 15 is a contribution, 15e is an earmarked contribution (made through a group such as Club for Growth or Emily's List), 15j is a contribution through a joint fund raising committee and 22y is a refund. "10" indicates "soft" or nonfederal money for the 2002 cycle and earlier. For the 2004 cycle and later type "10" indicates Levin funds.or outside spending.	Text	3	FEC
CmtelD	The committee id number for the recipient. Note that a candidate can have more than one committee — this field indicates the exact committee receiving the contribution.	Text	9	FEC

OtherID	The committee id number for the intermediary party to earmarked contributions.	Text	9	FEC
Gender	The donor's gender. Can also be "U" if unknown or "N" if the name is ambiguous.	Text	1	CRP
Microfilm	Refers to specific page of FEC report images on which this transaction appears.	Text	11	FEC
Occupation	The donor's disclosed occupation.	Text	38	FEC
Employer	The donor's s disclosed employer	Text	38	FEC
Source	Indicates how the RealCode was determined — see the How to Use Source in the OpenSecrets OpenData Guide	Text	5	

4. COMMITTEES: [157,542 rows - 15 cols]

Field	Definition	Type	Length	Source
Cycle	Last year (even year) of the federal 2-year election cycle	Text	4	FEC
CmtelD	Unique ID given by FEC to each committee.	Text	9	FEC
PACShort	Standardized committee name based on PAC's sponsor.	Text	50	CRP
Affiliate	Usually blank. For leadpacs, shows the sponsoring member.	Text	50	CRP
Ultorg	The standardized parent organization for the organization listed in the PACShort field. If there is no parent identified, this field will be equal to PACShort.	Text	50	CRP
RecipID	For candidate committees this will be the candidate's CID. Otherwise, it will be the same as CmtelD.	Text	9	CRP
RecipCode	A two-character code defining the type of recipient. For candidates, the first character is party ("D" for Democratic, "R" for Republican, "3" for Independent, Libertarian or third party, "U" for Unknown.) The second character is "W" for Winner, "L" for Loser, "I" for incumbent, "C" for Challenger, "O" for "Open Seat", and "N" for Non-incumbent. "N" is reserved for candidates that are neither in office nor running during the cycle in question. For party committees, the first character is party and the second character is "P." For PACs, the first character is "P" and for outside spending groups, "O". For both, the second character is "B" for Business, "L" for Labor, "I" for Ideological, "O" for "Other" and "U" for unknown.	Text	2	CRP
FECCandID	Unique ID given to candidates by FEC.	Text	9	FEC
Party	(D,R,3,I,L) Will be null or empty if committee is not a party, joint fundraising, leadership or candidate committee.	Text	1	CRP/FEC
PrimCode	The standard five character code identifying the committee's industry or ideology.	Text	5	CRP
Source	Indicates how the PrimCode was determined.	Text	5	CRP
Sensitive	If "Y", the committee has significant business in multiple industries, some of which fall under the jurisdiction of specific congressional committees.	Text	1	CRP
Foreign	This is a bit field. Off/False indicate that the company is not owned by a foreign entity. Those that are owned by a foreign entity are on/True, sometimes "-1".	Bit		CRP
Active	Determines if cmte is active in the cycle - 0 is no and 1 is yes	Integer		CRP

5. PACS: [3,539,657 rows - 11 cols]

Field	Definition	Type	Length	Source
Cycle	Last year (even year) of the federal 2-year election cycle	Text	4	FEC
FECRecNo	A unique record identifier within a given cycle.	Text	19	FEC
PACID	The committee id number for the PAC making the contribution.	Text	9	FEC
CID	A unique identifier for candidates that is constant throughout cycles.	Text	9	CRP
Amount	The amount contributed. This will be negative for refunds.	float		FEC
Date	The reported date of the contribution.	Date		FEC
RealCode	The standard five character code identifying the donor's industry or ideology. Usually based on Primcode. Sometimes a PAC sponsor will have secondary interests which may replace the main realcode depending on recipient. For example, Boeing is primarily Air Transport but has Air Defense interests. Thus Boeing contributions to members of the Armed Services committee would have a realcode of Air Defense.	Text	5	CRP
Type	The transaction type code for the contribution. 24A is an Independent Expenditure against the candidate, 24C is a coordinated expenditure, 24E is an independent expenditure for the candidate, 24F is a communication cost for the candidate, 24K is a direct contribution, 24N is a communication cost against the candidate and 24Z is an in kind contribution	Text	3	FEC
DI	Whether the contribution is direct ("D") or indirect ("I."). Indirect contributions include independent expenditures and communications costs, are not subject to contribution limits and must be made completely independently of the candidate. Indirect contributions can also be against the candidate.	Text	1	CRP
FECCandID	FECCandID of recipient candidate	Text	9	FEC

6. CANDIDATES: [67,999 rows - 17 cols]

Field	Definition	Type (Length)	Source
Cycle	Last year (even year) of the federal two year election cycle	Text (4)	FEC
FECCandID	Assigned by FEC and selected by CRP as the active, should multiples exist.	Text (9)	FEC
CID	Unique identifier for each candidate. Every candidate should have one and only one CID throughout all cycles. Recipid for candidates is based on CID.	Text (9)	CRP
FirstLastP	Candidate name in format of firstname lastname and party in parens, like Steve Kagen (D)	Text (50)	CRP
Party	The party of the candidate. "D" for Democratic, "R" for Republican, "I" for Independent, "L" for Libertarian, "3" for other third party and "U" for Unknown.	Text (1)	CRP
DistIDRunFor	Four character identifier of the office sought by the candidate. For congressional races, the first two characters are the state and the next two are the district for House candidates and "S1" or "S2" for Senate candidates. "PRES" indicates a presidential candidate.	Text (4)	CRP
DistIDCurr	Four character identifier of the office currently held (if any) by the candidate. For House members, the first two characters are the state and the next two are the district. For Senators the first two characters are the state and the last two characters are "S1" or "S2". "PRES" indicates a presidential candidate. For non-incumbents, this field is blank. If a member of Congress dies or leaves office, this field should become blank. This field is frozen on election day. For cycles prior to the current cycle, DistidCurr reflects office held on Election Day of the Cycle.	Text (4)	CRP
CurrCand	This field indicates whether the candidate is currently running for federal office - "Y" means yes, otherwise this field is blank. If a candidate loses a primary or drops out of the race, this field becomes blank. This field is frozen on Election Day, and thus for previous cycles can be used to show the candidate who ran in the general election.	Text (1)	CRP
CycleCand	This field indicates whether the candidate ever ran for federal office during the cycle in question. Like CurrCand, "Y" means yes and blank means no. This field should be "Y" for any candidate who filed to run for office or otherwise formally declared intention to run. This does NOT change if the candidate drops out or loses a primary. Be aware that we've tightened the definition in recent cycles - for older data, CycleCand is likely to cast a broader net. Also note that incumbents are usually assumed to be running for re-election and get a "Y" in CycleCand unless there is evidence to the contrary.	Text (1)	CRP
CRPICO	Identifies type of candidate - "I" is incumbent, "C" is challenger, "O" is open seat. This may be blank if the candidate is neither a member of Congress nor running this cycle. Note this is based	Text (1)	CRP

	on the office sought. A House incumbent running for the Senate would have a CRPICO of "C" or "O", not "I."		
RecipCode	A two-character code defining the type of candidate. The first character is party ("D" for Democratic, "R" for Republican, "3" for Independent or third party, "U" for Unknown.) The second character is "W" for Winner, "L" for Loser, "I" for incumbent, "C" for Challenger, "O" for "Open Seat", and "N" for Non-incumbent. Incumbent, Challenger and Open Seat are based on CRPICO. "N" is reserved for candidates that are neither in office nor running during the cycle in question. This lives in dbo_CandsCRP.	Text (2)	CRP
NoPacs	Indicates whether candidate has publicly committed to forego contributions from PACs	Text (1)	CRP

7. backers

[370 rows - 5 cols]

['id', 'cid', 'name', 'backer_level', 'kickstarter']

backer_level

kickstarter_backer	248
upstart	50
house	48
senate	22
leadership	2

8. industry_codes

[444 rows - 7 cols]

['id', 'category_code', 'category_name', 'industry_code', 'industry_name', 'sector', 'sector_long']

sector

Misc Business	102
Ideology/Single-Issue	45
Transportation	37
Finance/Insur/RealEst	35
Agribusiness	30
Labor	30
Energy/Nat Resource	30
Health	30

Communic/Electronics	27
Other	23
Construction	22
Defense	8
Lawyers & Lobbyists	6
Unknown	5
Non-contribution	5
Party Cmte	4
Joint Candidate Cmtes	3
Candidate	1

9. politicians
[26,047 rows - 3 cols]

['id', 'cid', 'name']