

RPAC contributions and the Local Board

Updated 1/09

Recently, a member wrote to tell us why she no longer supports RPAC. Her comments helped me realize that some members don't understand what happens to the RPAC FUNDS donated by members. This is a brief overview of the process.

What happens to my RPAC donation after I write the check? All RPAC donations received from members are sent to the Indiana Association of Realtors (IAR). IAR has the responsibility of tracking all the monies donated and sends a portion to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). Each donation is actually split three ways, a percentage goes to the National Association and the State Association. The State Association reserves a portion for the local Board to use upon request of the local Trustees. IAR tracks the funds raised each year and every local Board is given a three year window in which to use our monies to support local candidates or to run an issues campaign. If the RPAC donations allocated to the local Board is not within a three year time frame the funds revert back to the Indiana Association of REALTORS for their RPAC Trustees to use in support of state candidates or to fund an issues campaign. RPAC donations are always used at either a National, State or local level.

Who Decides How the RPAC Funds are Used? The National, State and Local Board all use the same process to distribute RPAC funds. That job is done by RPAC Trustees who are appointed each year by the Board President. Locally, the President of the Board appoints 5 to 7 members as RPAC Trustees. RPAC Trustees must agree to make bi-partisan decisions when serving as a Trustee. The decisions made are to benefit the real estate industry and the Realtor member and not one party or the other. This is an important distinction because the Trustees decide how, or if, local RPAC monies are spent each year and their decision is final and does not go before the Board of Directors for approval.

Do the Trustees have any guidelines? Yes, ECBOR has written policies that govern the Trustees. Each Trustee must sign a statement that they understand and agree to work within the guidelines adopted by the Board of Directors. They must be at least a \$99 contributor to RPAC and agree to put on a bi-partisan hat among other things. The Trustees make the decision how to spend RPAC funds on either candidates or issues.

How does a Candidate Request Support? The Trustees meet before the primaries to review all the races and decide what races may be important to the real estate industry. Although the Trustees rarely fund primary races they may decide to do so if the race will be determined in the primaries. For the most part, after the primary is over Staff is asked to send out a letter and an application for funding to all the candidates running in the selected races. If a candidate is interested in being considered for support, they must fill out the application and submit the requested paperwork to the trustees for consideration. The trustees then decide if they wish to support the candidates or not. The Trustees may make their decision based on the application or they may request that staff set up an interview with the candidates before making their decision. The candidates are then notified of the trustee's decision. If the Trustees decide to support a candidate's campaign, the candidate is issued a letter advising them of the Trustees decision and the candidate is asked to agree that the funding is not to be considered a public endorsement of the campaign unless the Trustees specifically state that they are also endorsing the candidate. Once the decision to support specific candidates is made, staff will request a check from IAR and the Trustees will either present the check to the candidate or it will be mailed to them along with the appropriate disclaimers. The names of the candidates are submitted to the Board of Directors for their information and then printed in the newsletter.

How do they support an Issue? The Trustees also have the opportunity to spend the local portion of RPAC monies to support specific issues instead of candidates. This works well when we need to bring attention to the public concerning an issue that may be a problem for the real estate industry or private property rights. In the past, ECBOR used the local allocation of RPAC money to bring awareness to the public about the property tax issue soon after the original lawsuit was settled that moved Indiana to a market driven assessment process. We ran advertisements, organize telephone banks, and send out mailings etc to get the public's attention. We can use RPAC monies for issues awareness whenever we feel an issue needs the support of the public and voters. We can also designate all or a portion of our allotment to be used by the state in support of an issue they are working on.

I hope this information provides some insight on how RPAC funds are used to benefit Realtor members not only on a National and State level but in their very own communities

I can personally attest that donating to RPAC is effective and does bring real estate industry issues to the forefront of the political arena. The Realtor organization is well respected on all levels of government as well as globally. RPAC dollars help protect private property rights as well as our ability to earn a living in the real estate industry. The bottom line is that RPAC is not without it's flaws but it does benefit all Realtor members not just those who contribute. If you do not contribute, you should be grateful to the members and Affiliates who do support RPAC. We ask you to make a personal commitment every year to do your part by writing a check to RPAC. RPAC works for you.

Julie Alert
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