

- February 2, 2015, 6:33 PM ET

FEC Raises Contribution Caps for 2016

By Rebecca Ballhaus

A ticket to a political party fundraiser could cost as much \$100,200 in the 2016 election cycle, following a routine increase in **Federal Election Commission** contribution caps and last year's Supreme Court ruling striking down the overall limit on individuals' political contributions.

Under new FEC limits, which are adjusted for inflation in odd-numbered years, individuals can give up to \$5,400 to candidates—\$2,700 for their primary campaigns, and another \$2,700 for the general election—and up to \$33,400 per year to national party committees in the 2016 cycle.

Previously, the limit was \$2,600 to candidates and \$32,400 to national party committees per year.

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In April 2014, the Supreme Court threw out the \$123,200 cap on what individuals could give to federal candidates and political committees over a two-year election cycle, saying the limits infringed on First Amendment free-speech rights. Within two weeks, the three national GOP party committees formed a joint fundraising committee allowing them to host events where they could request checks three times the size of what they could accept on their own.

Previously, they were not barred from creating a joint committee, but the aggregate limit would usually block individuals from giving the joint effort more than each committee's cap.

Under the new limits, the joint committee—called **Republican Victory Fund**—can accept as much as \$100,200 from an individual person or political entity.

Democratic Party committees have not yet set up a similar joint effort.

The new limits will also increase the amounts political parties can collect for separate units that pay for national conventions, the construction and renovation of headquarters and the cost of election recounts. A provision

included in the spending bill passed by Congress in December allowed parties to create such units for the first time. Individuals will be able to give up to \$334,000 each year to national party committees in the 2016 cycle—\$33,400 for candidate advocacy and party-building, plus \$100,200 for each of the three units.

The FEC also adjusted the threshold of how much money registered lobbyists can raise for a political committee before their names are required to be disclosed. The new threshold is \$17,600, up from \$17,300. Most presidential candidates have voluntarily disclosed the names of individuals who bundle money for their campaigns, but some—including 2012 GOP nominee **Mitt Romney**—have only listed those the FEC required them to. In 2012, Mr. Romney disclosed the name of 69 registered lobbyists who raised money for his campaign. President **Barack Obama**, meanwhile, released his full list of bundlers—769 individuals.

The new limits are set to be published in the Federal Register on Tuesday.

– *Byron Tau contributed to this article.*