

# Nevada to make campaign contribution info accessible online

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Members of the public interested in the esoteric world of political campaign contribution and expense reports should be salivating with the knowledge that as of Jan. 1, this information will finally be available in a usable format.

Secretary of State Ross Miller said as a result of campaign finance reporting reforms he sought and the Legislature approved this past session, the contributions candidates receive and the expenditures they make on their campaigns will soon be much more transparent.

His office staff is working now on creating a searchable database that will allow interested persons to examine the newly revised reports filed by elected officials and candidates in a number of different ways. The new reporting requirements take effect Jan. 1, and Miller said his office intends to have the database ready on that date. The first use of the new search function will come as elected officials from across the state electronically file their annual reports for calendar year 2011 on Jan. 15, 2012.

As the reports are filed the information will instantly become available on the Secretary of State's website. No longer will officials be able to mail in reports, requiring manual loading of the information by Miller's staff. No longer will handwritten and sometimes illegible reports be accepted, with an exception for those who claim no access to the necessary technology.

At 12:01am on Jan. 16, all of the information from the Jan. 15

reports will be accessible. Sooner for those reports filed early.

“Mandating that these reports be filed electronically is the first step in putting the information in a way that is accessible to the public,” Miller said. “And I think when this system is unveiled it will bring Nevada out of the Dark Ages of campaign finance reporting and finally shine a light on the campaign finance data to make it accessible in a format for the public.”

State Sen. David Parks, D-Las Vegas, chairman of the Legislative Operations and Elections Committee that reviewed and supported the changes, said lawmakers made a lot of progress on the campaign reporting issue last session. But as one who must comply with the new requirements, Parks said he is looking forward to seeing the new reporting forms.

The easier it is for elected officials to complete the reports, the better the compliance will be, he said.

“I think we have an obligation to file reports that are well documented and as accurate as possible,” Parks said.

Miller said people will be able to search for contributions by a contributor’s name or address, by specific amounts or by a date range. On the expenditure side, people will be able to search by the name of the person or business paid, by the amount, by certain dates or by expenditure types.

Other search options will also be available, and the data will be exportable into a PDF or CSV format.

Miller said his office will not be able to add information from reports filed by mail by elected officials and candidates in previous election cycles. But if a candidate or elected official previously filed a report electronically, that information will be available as well, he said.