

Kentucky



50 Overall Rank

F Overall Grade

Kentucky	Overall Rank	To Governor	To State Senate	To State House	To Parties	To PACs
Individual Giving	48	47	39	37	48	46
		\$1,000/election	\$1,000/election	\$1,000/election	\$2,500/year	\$1,500/year
PAC Giving	48	47	40	39	48	
		\$1,000/election	\$1,000/election	\$1,000/election	\$2,500/year	
Party Giving	42	45	41	39		
		\$10,000/election	\$10,000/election	\$10,000/election		
Union Giving	50	50	50	50		
		Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited		
Corporate Giving	50	50	50	50		
		Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited		

Inflation Adjustment: No

Kentucky ranks dead last in the Free Speech Index. The Bluegrass State imposes very low limits across-the-board on contributions by individuals, parties, and political committees, and prohibits businesses and labor unions from giving to candidates at all. Inexcusably, parties can give just \$10,000 per election to their candidates, including those citizens running for governor.

Until recently, unions in Kentucky could make contributions to candidates, although corporations could not. This imbalance initially led a court to enjoin enforcement of the prohibition on corporate giving. However, the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance opted to respond – not by expanding the speech rights of both groups – but instead by issuing new rules prohibiting both businesses and unions from making direct contributions to candidates.

As if ranking dead last for its low limits was insufficient, Kentucky also has additional regulations that restrict speech. Kentucky limits different types of PACs and party committees separately, creating confusion that discourages speech. The state further imposes an aggregate limit on party and PAC giving to candidates, such that no candidate can receive more than 50% of their funds from a party or PAC (or \$10,000, whichever is greater).

The Bluegrass State performs so badly at protecting free political speech that it would do well to consider a complete overhaul of its campaign laws, with an eye toward embracing – not restricting – free and open debate.