

Democrats Seek Federal Funds for 2016 Convention

In a letter sent to U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), who serves as Chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, the Congressional Budget Office says it has reviewed proposed legislation to allow the use of Presidential Election Campaign Fund monies to defray the expenses of nominating conventions.

In the letter, CBO Director Keith Hall says the proposed legislation would reverse 2012 legislation that prevents PECF appropriations from being used to fund the nominating conventions. Under current law, the PECF may be used to match “qualifying political contributions” to presidential campaigns.

“About \$1 million was spent from the fund to match qualifying campaign contributions in 2012, and a similar amount is projected to be spent in 2016 because the presidential candidates of the major parties are not expected to seek such funds,” Hall wrote.

Money from the PECF may also be used to fund pediatric health research. The same law that precludes the use of funds for nominating conventions—the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act—allows their use for such research activities. In 2015, about \$13 million was allocated for that purpose.

The PECF receives about \$40 million annual from taxpayers who voluntarily earmarked a portion of their income taxes for the fund. The designation does not change a taxpayer’s tax liability or refund.

The PECF has grown to about \$290 million. Wasserman Schultz’s proposed legislation would come with a big price tag.

“CBO estimates that each of the major political parties would spend about \$20 million from the PECF in 2016, if the proposed legislation was enacted,” Hall wrote. “Because those amounts are not expected to be spent under current law, CBO estimates that this legislation would increase direct spending by \$40 million in 2016.”