The President Election Campaign Fund (PECF) Checkoff

- Federal funds that are used to pay for the political nominating conventions come from the Presidential Election Campaign Fund (PECF). The PECF is funded by a voluntary checkoff on tax returns. Individuals may elect to send $3 of their tax bill to the fund rather than the general treasury, and married couples filing jointly may send $6.

- According to the Federal Election Commission, “The checkoff neither increases the amount of taxes owed nor decreases any refund due for the tax year in which the checkoff is made.”¹ The following is copied from the 2011 IRS Form 1040.²

  Presidential Election Campaign
  Check here if you, or your spouse if filing jointly, want $3 to go to this fund. Checking a box below will not change your tax or refund. [ ] You [ ] Spouse

- The Congressional Research Service notes the following:

  “Although taxpayers may believe that how they answer the checkoff question affects the amount of tax they owe or the refund they receive, ‘[d]esignating the allowed amount does not affect the amount of an individual’s tax liability or tax refund; it simply directs the Treasury Department to allocate a specific amount from general revenues to the PECF.’…In short, participating (or not) in the checkoff designation does not affect a taxpayer’s liability or refund. Rather, it allows taxpayers to direct a small portion of the taxes they pay to the PECF instead of the Treasury’s general fund.”³

- Any expenditures from the PECF, therefore, are not funded by extra contributions from the taxpayers. They are funded by revenue that has been diverted from the general fund.