

# Election Law Co-Chair Michael Toner Discusses Embezzlement of Campaign Funds in *Bloomberg* Article

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Michael Toner, co-chair of the Election Law & Government Ethics Practice, was quoted in an article focusing on the increase of embezzlement of campaign funds by treasurers. As reported, several politicians including Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA), then-Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) and then-Senator Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) have fallen victim to campaign treasurers who pilfered campaign accounts for their own financial gain. Rep. Davis' campaign has estimated that she could have lost as much as \$250,000 to embezzlement. "As candidates raise more money for their campaigns, there is greater opportunity for nefarious treasurers to embezzle campaign cash from politicians accustomed to putting their careers in the hands of consultants, aides and volunteers," Mr. Toner—a former Federal Election Commission (FEC) chairman—said. "It can really turn your campaign upside down," he added. "It becomes a lot harder to get new contributions when you've just been embezzled. You don't have the money you thought you have and you've got to reach out to donors and say, 'I've got to start over,'" Mr. Toner explained.

Candidates and political committees have also had to face fines from the FEC for filing inaccurate disclosure reports. The FEC has enacted a policy protecting political committees from fines for filing false reports provided that certain safeguards are in place such as requiring two people to sign for a check of more than \$1,000 and keeping the accounts in the name of the committee and not an individual "The last thing you need is a government penalty," Mr. Toner said. "The challenge here is having the money to really invest

## Related Professionals

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## Practice Areas

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Election Law & Government Ethics

in compliance. With television advertising and consultants often ranked as top budget priorities for campaigns, it's tough because they don't have the dollars to invest in these areas," he concluded.