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U.S. Court Upholds Federal Contractor Campaign Finance Ban

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia rejected a constitutional challenge to the ban on U.S. government contractors making political contributions to candidates for federal office and federal political party committees. The Court in Wagner v. Federal Election Commission held that the justifications for limitations on campaign contributions—to protect against quid pro quo corruption and its appearance and to protect merit-based awards of federal contracts—remain valid. The 75-year-old ban on contractor contributions prohibits contributions from any person or entity contracting with the federal government, including those from individuals or sole proprietors.

While the case challenged the ban only with respect to contributions from individuals providing services to the government who wished to make contributions to candidates and political parties, government contractors should be aware that the statute covers not only contributions to political parties and candidates for public office, but also contributions to committees or any person for any political purpose. Therefore, with the presidential election season already under way, contractors should remain vigilant.
Contact Information
If you have any questions regarding this alert, please contact:

**Melissa L. Laurenza**  
Partner  
mlaurenza@akingump.com  
202.887.4251  
Washington, D.C.

**Robert K. Huffman**  
Partner  
rhuffman@akingump.com  
202.887.4530  
Washington, D.C.

**Scott M. Heimberg**  
Partner  
sheimberg@akingump.com  
202.887.4085  
Washington, D.C.

**Leslie B. Kiernan**  
Partner  
lkiernan@akingump.com  
202.887.4515  
Washington, D.C.

**Stanley M. Brand**  
Senior Counsel  
sbrand@akingump.com  
202.887.4525  
Washington, D.C.

**Samuel Olswanger**  
Senior Public Policy Specialist  
solswanger@akingump.com  
202.416.5142  
Washington, D.C.

**Hayley Evans**  
Public Policy Specialist  
hevans@akingump.com  
202.416.5156  
Washington, D.C.