Tips for Successful Searching of Political Organization Disclosures

The Political Organization Disclosure site can be used for searching paper and electronic filings for Forms 8871 and Forms 8872, as well as paper filings of Form 990 by section 527 organizations. **See the Table of Contents below for information that will increase your success in searching and your understanding of the results.**

The most important tip for successful searching of political organization disclosures is to understand what data is available in the search and from which dates. This information will be provided in this article, as well as on the search pages.

All paper and electronic forms on the Political Organization Disclosure site are in PDF format. To view these PDF files, you will need the freely available Adobe Acrobat Reader software. For more information regarding the Adobe Acrobat Reader, please refer to the related IRS.gov help section.

As an alternative to online searching, you may choose to download the entire database of electronically submitted Forms 8871 and Forms 8872. Please note that these downloadable data files do not include any paper submissions of Forms 8871, Forms 8872, or Forms 990.

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General Search Information and Tips:

In both the basic and advanced search, the more information provided in the search query will produce more refined results, because searches on the Political Organization Disclosure site are *AND* queries. This means that there is an implied **AND** between each term entered. For example, when conducting an advanced search for an organization with an officer named *John Smith*, you will return more refined results if you type *John Smith*, rather than only *John* or *Smith*. Conversely, using the previous search example, if you are uncertain of the officer's first name, entering only *Smith* will return all names containing *Smith*, thus allowing you to scan the results to find the target organization.

None of the search fields on the Political Organization Disclosure site are case sensitive. All words are understood as lower case (not capitalized) during searching. Therefore, searching with the phrases *JOHN SMITH*, *John Smith*, or *john smith* will all produce the same results. All of these searches will return records containing *John Smith* regardless of the case in which the record exists on the site.

Wild Card Searching
The Political Organization Disclosure site allows *wild card* searches. To conduct a wild card search, use an asterisk (*) to truncate a word or phrase to the portion you require in your results. The asterisk represents a wild card because it stands for ANY characters. There are three types of wild card searches: Right Truncation, Left Truncation, and Middle Truncation.

- *Right truncatio*n occurs when you end a word or phrase with a wild card character. This action results in a search for words matching the characters before the asterisk, and ignoring all characters to the right. For

example, a search containing the phrase *Smith** may produce results containing *Smith*, *Smithson*, *Smith for President*, etc.

- *Left truncation* occurs when you begin a word or phrase with a wild card character. This action results in a search for words matching the characters after the asterisk, and ignoring all characters to the left. For example, a search containing the phrase **tion* may produce results containing *organization*, *relation*, gas station, etc.

- *Middle truncation* occurs when you place a wild card character in the middle of a word or phrase. This action results in a search for words matching the characters before and after the asterisk, and ignoring all characters in the middle. For example, a search containing the phrase *org*tion* may produce results containing *organization*, *organized nation*, etc.

Where in the search the asterisk or wild card is placed affects the search results. The information entered in a field by a filer is treated as a single data *string*. The Political Organization Disclosure site searches for exact words in the order you enter them. The following examples illustrate various searches including *wild card* searches. Generally, a search with fewer words yields more results.

Name As Entered On Form 8872	Search Criteria	Found With Search Criteria? Y/N	Reason Expected Result Is Not Found
John B Smith, MD	Smith	Y	
John B Smith, MD	John B. Smith, MD	Y	
John B Smith, MD	John B Smith	Y	
John B Smith, MD	John B Smith*	Y	
John B Smith, MD	*Smith	N	The query is looking for strings beginning with ANYTHING and ending with Smith. This string ends with Smith, MD.

John B Smith, MD	Smith*		N	The query is looking for strings beginning with *Smith* and ending with ANYTHING. This string begins with *John*. Searching with **smith** or *smith* would find *John B Smith, MD*.
John B Smith, MD	John Smith		N	The query is looking for the existence (anywhere in the field) of the exact string *John Smith*. The actual data is *John B Smith*.
John B Smith, MD	*John B Smith		N	The query is looking for strings beginning with ANYTHING and ending with *John B Smith*. This string ends with *John B Smith, MD*.

<u>Exact and Partial String Searching</u>
The Political Organization Disclosure site searches for exact words and phrases in the order you enter them, regardless of where they exist in the target string. For example, searching on *John Smith* may produce results containing *John Smith*, *Elect John Smith*, or *John Smith for President*. However, using *John Smith* as the query will not return *John A. Smith* or *John Locksmith* in the results.

<u>Exact Match Searching</u>
When you only want a specific phrase in your results, surrounding the word or phrase with quotation marks will restrict your results to exact matches. For example, searching the organization name field with *"John Smith for President"* (as appears -- surrounded by quotation marks) will produce only the single organization named John Smith for President. In this example, the search results would not return *John Smithson for President*, *John Smith for President 2004*, or *John Smith for Vice-President*.

Basic Search Details:

The **Basic Search** is an easy way to find all electronic submissions of Form 8871 and Form 8872 and paper submissions of Form 8871, Form 8872, and Form 990. All paper and electronic filings contain searchable data for the Organization's Name field, Employer Identification Number (EIN) field, and the date the form was originally posted to the site (Date Posted field). To conduct a basic search, simply enter the terms into one or more of the fields and click the **Submit Basic Search** button. If you want to reset your search, click the **Reset Search** button.

Basic Search Results Explained
Upon submitting a basic search, a results page will display a listing of the names and EINs for organizations that have filed forms meeting your search criteria. To view the actual forms, click the name of the desired organization. The resulting page will display, in detail, the organization's latest information and a listing of its filings that meet your search criteria.

- To view an Adobe PDF version of a specific filing, click on the word **Paper** or **Electronic** in the Submission Type column next to the appropriate form. The Submission Type refers to how the filing was made (either electronically through the web site or by mailing a paper form).
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- The list of filings in your results will be limited to 10 per page. Use the page numbers or the **Next** and **Prev** links to view all of the results pages.

Advanced Search Details:

There are three types of Advanced Searches:

- the Advanced 8871 Search,
- the Advanced 8872 Search, and
- the Combined 8871 and 8872 Search.

Advanced searches are limited to information available from electronically filed forms (not forms filed on paper). In all three advanced searches, you can search any or all fields contained on the electronically filed form (such as *Name of Organization*, *EIN*, *Contact Name*, *Amount of Contribution*, etc.) for criteria that you specify. The results will be limited by the date the information was made available, as the legal requirements and the reporting methods (paper or

electronic filing) changed. To help you search, the advanced search pages indicate which information is available from which dates. Therefore, if you search fields across multiple date ranges, your search results will be limited to the most recent date range.

Advanced 8871 Search Details
The Advanced 8871 Search can find all electronic submissions of Form 8871. The Advanced 8871 Search allows the use of **ANY** or **ALL** Form 8871 fields in your query.

There are two steps to an Advanced 8871 search. First, select the field(s) that you want to include in your search by clicking the checkbox next to the appropriate field. Once you have chosen your desired field(s), click the **Next Step** button, which produces a search form page. Second, use the search form page to enter your criteria into the chosen fields and click the **Submit Advanced Search** button to obtain your results. If you want to reset your search, click the **Reset Search** button.

Important: Notice that the fields you choose for your search are listed by the date information is available. If you search fields across multiple date ranges, your search results will be limited to the most recent date range. For example, a search for *Date Established* and *Name of Organization* will only return forms submitted since December 2002, the earliest date for which information is available.

Advanced 8872 Search Details
The Advanced 8872 Search can find all electronic submissions of Form 8872. The Advanced 8872 Search allows the use of **ANY** or **ALL** Form 8872 fields in your query.

There are two steps to an Advanced 8872. First, select the field(s) that you want to include in your search by clicking the checkbox next to the appropriate field. Once you have chosen your desired field(s), click the **Next Step** button, which produces a search form page. Second, use the search form page to enter your criteria into the chosen fields and click the **Submit Advanced Search** button to obtain your results. If you want to reset your search, click the **Reset Search** button.

Important: Notice that the fields you choose for your search are listed by the date information is available. If you search fields across multiple date ranges, your search results will be limited to the most recent date range. For example, a search for *Date of Contribution* and *Name of Organization* will only return forms submitted since December 2002, the earliest date for which information is available.

Combined 8871 and 8872 Details

The Combined 8871 and 8872 Search can find all electronic submissions of Forms 8871 and Forms 8872. This combined search allows the use of **ANY** or **ALL** fields that are common between Form 8871 and Form 8872 in your query.

There are two steps to a Combined 8871 and 8872 search. First, select the field(s) that you want to include in your search by clicking the checkbox next to the appropriate field. Once you have chosen your desired field(s), click the **Next Step** button, which produces a search form page. Second, use the search form page to enter your criteria into the chosen fields and click the **Submit Advanced Search** button to obtain your results. If you want to reset your search, click the **Reset Search** button.

Important: Notice that the fields you choose for your search are listed by the date information is available. If you search fields across multiple date ranges, your search results will be limited to the most recent date range. For example, a search for *Date Established* and *Name of Organization* will only return Forms 8871 submitted since December 2002 and Forms 8872 since November 2000, the earliest date for which information is available.

Advanced Search Results Explained

Upon submitting an advanced search, a results page will display a listing of all filings that meet your search criteria.

- To view an Adobe PDF version of a specific filing, click on the word *Electronic* in the Submission Type column next to the appropriate form. All advanced search results will be electronic filings. Paper filings can be found with the Basic Search.
- To sort the results by a particular column, click on the column heading. Clicking once will sort the list in ascending order, while clicking a second time will sort the list in descending order.
- The list of filings in your results will be limited to 10 per page. Use the page numbers or the **Next** and **Prev** links to view all of the results pages.

Popular Search Details:

The Popular Search is an easy way to search without having to choose or submit numerous criteria. To conduct a popular search, select **ONLY ONE** of the available pre-defined searches and click the **Submit Popular Search** button.

The *All organizations with any...* is a Popular Search option from which you may choose:

- Form posted on the previous day.

- Form 8871 posted on the previous day.
- Form 8872 posted on the previous day.
- Form 990 posted on the previous day.
- Form posted during the previous month.
- Form 8871 posted during the previous month.
- Form 8872 posted during the previous month.
- Form 990 posted during the previous month.
- Form posted during the current year.
- Form 8871 posted during the current year.
- Form 8872 posted during the current year.
- Form 990 posted during the current year.

In addition, the following five Popular Search options allow you to refine your results by entering a dollar amount in the box provided and selecting the time period to which your search should apply.

- Any Form 8872 with total contributions in excess of any dollar amount you provide (during the current month, previous month, or current year).
- Any Form 8872 with total expenditure in excess of any dollar amount you provide (during the current month, previous month, or current year).
- Any person making a contribution in excess of any dollar amount you provide (during the current month, previous month, or current year).
- Any person with aggregate contributions in excess of any dollar amount you provide (during the current month, previous month, or current year).
- Any person receiving a payment in excess of any dollar amount you provide (during the current month, previous month, or current year).

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