

McCain warned by FEC on campaign spending

by UPI

WASHINGTON - The chairman of the federal elections watchdog told Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., that he can't immediately withdraw from the presidential public financing system. FEC Chairman David M. Mason, a Republican, notified McCain that the commission hadn't granted his Feb. 6 request to withdraw from the presidential public financing system. The letter was posted in the FEC Web site. McCain, strapped for cash last year, signed up for federal matching funds, agreeing to adhere to an overall spending limit of \$54 million for the primary season lasting until the party's nominating convention. The general election season has a separate public financing arrangement. Mason's letter listed two reasons for his position: He said the six-member commission needs to vote on the request but can't because it lacks a quorum. Four seats are vacant, hung up because of a U.S. Senate deadlock over U.S. George President Bush's nominees. The second issue involves a \$1 million loan McCain got from a Bethesda, Md., bank that expressed concern about McCain's ability to repay if he leaves the federal financing program and began to lose. McCain's campaign has already spent \$49 million, federal reports show. Knowingly violating the spending limit is a criminal offense punishable by fines and imprisonment.

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