

RUNNING FOR ELECTED OFFICE

Running for Countywide or Municipal Office

There are a variety of topics that can be beneficial for individuals deciding to run for office and on which they should inform themselves. It is beneficial for individuals to research the responsibilities, requirements, and duties of the office they intend to seek. It is also helpful to identify resources for understanding campaign finance requirements for candidates.

Gaining Access to the Ballot

Three methods for gaining access to the November ballot:

- You can file nomination petitions in the Primary Election. If you win a party's nomination in the Primary Election, you then move forward to compete in the General Election in November. (Democratic or Republican)
- Direct access to the November ballot can be achieved through filing nomination papers. Candidates interested in running representing minor political parties or political bodies file nomination papers requesting placement on the November ballot. (Libertarians, Independents, etc.)
- Write-in campaigns can be conducted either in the Primary Election or the General Election. It is recommended that you contact the Elections Office (814-432-9514) to make us aware that you are conducting a write-in campaign and request a form to identify any alternative names that should be attributed to you.

Getting on the Ballot

Nomination Petitions

All candidates who wish to appear on the Democratic or Republican ballot in the Primary Election must file what are known as **Nomination Petitions** along with a **Statement of Financial Interests** with the County Board of Elections prior to the established deadline (available on the 2025 Election Calendar tab) for the Election year in which the office appears on the ballot. An instruction packet, the nomination petitions, statement of financial interests, and street/walking lists (if requested) are available in the Elections office.

Registered voters, who are enrolled members of the party of which you are seeking nomination, sign petitions which are used to petition the County Board of Elections to print your name on the Primary Ballot as a candidate for the office you are seeking. In addition to being actively registered members of the party, the signers must reside in the electoral district of the office sought. View a list of the number of signatures required to run for office as well as applicable filing fees (if any).

Statement of Financial Interests

The Statement of Financial interests is a form that must be filed along with the petition, which requires the filer to set forth information regarding the filer's sources of income. Candidates must also provide the governing authority for the office they are seeking with a completed copy of their Statement of Financial Interest. This must be provided prior to the end of the petition filing deadline. If more information is required, the State Ethics Commission's website provides additional information, they can also be reached by phone at 800-932-0936. Candidates who have completed all of the required paperwork, successfully filed a nomination petition, and won their party's nomination in the Primary Election will have their name appear on the November Ballot for the office they are seeking.

Nomination Papers

Individuals looking to run as a member of a minor political party, can accomplish this by competing on the November ballot for the office they are seeking. It is important to note that a candidate may not run as a Libertarian or Independent if they are a registered member of a major political party. A candidate would need to withdraw from their registered political party at least 30 days prior to the Primary Election, remain unaffiliated through the November Election, and may not participate in the Primary Election in any way. The definition for participation, in this case, includes filing nomination petitions and running a write-in campaign. Withdrawal or rejection of your nomination petition does not excuse you from this rule.

When filing nomination papers, signatures from qualified registered electors in the district the candidate is running in, must be collected. The number of signatures required is at least 2% of the largest entire vote cast for an elected candidate at the last election within the district with the caveat that the number of signatures cannot be less than the number required for that office for nomination petition filing. Candidates should contact the Elections Office to determine the required number of signatures.

Write-in Campaign

Individuals may conduct a "write-in" campaign in either the Primary Election, the November Election, or both. Candidates running this type of campaign DO NOT have their name printed on the ballot. Instead, they request for voters to write their name in for their desired office. If a candidate wins the nomination for the office in the Primary, their name would be printed on the November ballot. The Candidate will have to complete and return acceptance forms along with the appropriate paperwork prior to the established deadline in order for their name to appear on the November ballot. If the candidate does not provide the required information timely, their name will not appear on the November ballot. It is also important to note that write-in campaigns are still required to file campaign finance reports/forms.

Challenges to Nomination Petitions & Nomination Papers

Typically, an individual can challenge the validity of a nomination petition or nomination paper within seven days of the filing deadline for nomination petitions or nomination papers. Most challenges focus on the validity of individual signatures on a nomination petition or nomination paper. Typically, signatures are challenged on the basis that the signer was not qualified to sign the candidate's nomination petition or nomination paper, or the information provided by the signer is illegible. On some occasions, the validity of a signature is challenged on the basis that the signer's handwriting or signature does not match that of the signer's registration record. Most other challenges are based on the accuracy of the information provided by the candidate on the Candidate's Affidavit or Statement of Financial Interests.

Campaign Finance Reporting

- Campaign finance reports or statements must be filed by all candidates for public office, this includes those running write-in campaigns. The purpose of these reports is to provide information regarding contributions to candidates and to outline expenditures of those monies for the purpose of influencing the outcome of an election.
- Not all candidates will accept donations and expend monies associated with their attempt to achieve election to a public office. In these cases, and in cases where less than \$250 is going to be spent on the campaign; A Waiver of Expense Account Reporting Affidavit may be submitted. This is a way to waive reporting obligations.
- A candidate may submit a waiver, but then spend more than the threshold. In these cases, they would file campaign finance reports or statements that reflect that financial activity, as they would have in absence of the waiver.
- Candidates may also authorize a committee to accept contributions and make expenditures on their behalf. Committees must have a chairperson and a treasurer; they may not be the same person. Each candidate and each authorized political committee must file reports of receipts and expenditures, if the amount received or expended or liabilities incurred exceeds \$250. Otherwise, the candidate or the treasurer of the authorized committee may file the statement in lieu of the reports.
- Candidates are required to file separately their campaign finance reports (or other required statement of finances) from their authorized committee.
- When in doubt consult the PA Department of State Campaign Finance webpage and/or consult an attorney for direction.