

Election Steps for Candidates - Frequently Asked Questions

From the Clark County Elections Office

Summer / Fall 2016

Q: How do I become a candidate for office?

A: To officially file for office, you must complete a [Declaration of Candidacy](#) form and file it at the Clark County Elections Office, 1408 Franklin Street, Vancouver. The filing must include the filing fee, if one is required.

Q: What are the qualifications for becoming a candidate?

A: The basic qualifications for most offices are simple. The candidate must be a registered voter currently residing in the jurisdiction in which she or he is seeking elective office. For more specific information please refer to the 2016 Candidate Manual published by the Elections Office.

Q: When do I file as a candidate?

A: The in-person filing period begins Monday, May 16, 2016 and continues through Friday, May 20, 2016. Candidates may also file using the online candidate filing system. The system will be active twenty-four hours a day from 9 am, May 16 through 4 pm, May 20 and can be accessed at clarkvotes.org. In addition, filings by mail will be accepted if received no sooner than ten business days before the beginning of the filing period, which is May 2, and received no later than the last day of filing period, which is May 20.

Q: How do I file by mail?

A: Obtain a Declaration of Candidacy filing form by contacting the Clark County Elections Office at (360) 397-2345 or at elections@clark.wa.gov. You may also download the form [here](#). If there is a filing fee, that fee must accompany the Declaration of Candidacy form for your filing to be valid. Please do not send cash through the mail. Make checks payable to: Clark County Election Reserve Fund.

Q: What if I mail my form in plenty of time and it is not received until after the end of the filing period?

A: Court cases have ruled that to be considered valid, a filing must be received by the Elections Office before the end of the filing period, regardless of circumstances, such as slow or wrong delivery or loss by the post office. If you

mail your filing form, it is a good idea to call the Elections Office at (360) 397-2345 to make sure it was received on time.

Q: If I cannot come into the Elections Office myself and I do not want to mail the Declaration of Candidacy form, what can I do?

A: Anyone may deliver your Declaration of Candidacy form for you. But remember that if a friend or an associate is given the form and does not file it before the end of the filing period, you are not a candidate. Make sure that the individual that is filing on your behalf pays the filing fee, if applicable.

Q: What happens during candidate filing week?

A: In-person filings may only be made between 8 am and 5 pm. Filings will be taken on a first come, first served basis during the day. If the filing form is not complete, the candidate will be asked to complete the form. **Be sure to include the position or the district number of the position, if there is one.** The elections staff will verify that the information provided by the candidate on the Declaration of Candidacy form matches the candidate's voter registration file. A list of the candidates who have filed will be available at clarkvotes.org and will be updated daily during filing week.

Q: What is the fee to file for office?

A: The filing fee is one percent of the annual salary of the office. Refer to the [Open Offices in 2016](#) document on clarkvotes.org which lists open offices, annual salaries and filing fees.

Q: What if I want to be a candidate but cannot afford to pay a filing fee?

A: State law declares that if a candidate lacks the funds to pay the fee, the candidate may file a [Filing Fee Petition](#) that contains at least one valid signature per dollar of the filing fee. If the signatures are determined to be valid, the petition will take the place of the filing fee.

Q: What is considered a valid signature on the Filing Fee Petition?

A: A valid signature is one belonging to a voter registered in the jurisdiction in which the candidate wishes to file for office. For example, if a candidate wants to run for senator in a particular legislative district, the candidate's Filing Fee Petition can only be signed by voters in that legislative district.

Q: Where do I get the Filing Fee Petition?

A: Follow this link to get a copy of the [Filing Fee Petition](#). The Elections Office also has copies of the Filing Fee Petition. One page will be given to a candidate. Copies of additional pages will be provided at the candidate's expense.

Q: When do I turn in the Filing Fee Petition?

A: The Filing Fee Petition must be presented when you file your Declaration of Candidacy form during candidate filing week. The Declaration of Candidacy form will be accepted on a provisional basis. If there are not a sufficient number of valid signatures, the filing will not be accepted and your name will not be placed on the ballot. It is recommended that you collect at least 25 percent more signatures than necessary as it is not uncommon for signatures to be found to be invalid because they are duplicates or the signer is not a registered voter.

Q: What if I was not able to get enough valid signatures. May I use cash to make up the difference?

A: No. The filing fee must be either paid in full or the sufficient number of valid signatures must be provided. State law does not allow for a combination of the two.

Q: What happens if I decide to run for a position different from the one I filed for?

A: You must come into the Elections Office before the end of the filing period and complete a [Withdrawal of Candidacy](#) form. Then you must file another Declaration of Candidacy form for the position for which you want to run. **You must pay the filing fee again**, if there is one. The filing fee paid for a position cannot be transferred to another position, **nor is it refundable**.

Q: What if I decide I don't want to run for office after I file?

A: You may withdraw your candidacy no later than Monday, May 23, by filing a Withdrawal of Candidacy form at the Elections Office. **The filing fee is not refundable**. If you withdraw after this deadline, it is too late to have your name removed from the ballot.

Q: What if no one files for one of the open offices?

A: If no one has filed for an office by the end of the regular filing period, a special filing period will be announced and publicized. This special three-day filing period normally occurs the week after the last day to file for office. Only the offices for which no filing was received will be open for filing during the special filing period.

Q: When am I considered a candidate based on public disclosure law?

A: According to state public disclosure law, a person becomes a candidate when he or she performs one of the following actions: publicly announces his or her candidacy, begins collecting or spending money for a campaign, reserves space or purchases advertising to promote a candidacy, officially files for office during filing week, or authorizes an individual to do any of these activities on his or her behalf. Candidates must file public disclosure forms within 14 days of becoming a candidate.

Q: What are the required public disclosure forms?

A: Public disclosure requirements vary according to the size of the candidate's jurisdiction and the amount of money the candidate plans to spend. Candidates in jurisdictions of more than 5,000 registered voters must file the C-1 Candidate Registration form and the F-1 Personal Financial Affairs Statement form.

Q: Where do I get the public disclosure forms? What if I need help filling out the forms?

A: Public disclosure forms may be obtained from the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) or at pdc.wa.gov. If you need help filling out the forms, contact the PDC directly. The phone number is 1-360-753-1111 or toll-free 1-877-601-2828.

Q: How do I submit the completed public disclosure forms?

A: Public disclosure forms can be completed and submitted online at pdc.wa.gov. You may also submit the forms by mail to: Public Disclosure Commission, PO Box 40908, Olympia, WA 98504-0908.

Q: Will a voters' pamphlet be published for the elections?

A: There will be a local voters' pamphlet published for both the Primary and the General Election this year.

Q: Will I be included in the local voters' pamphlet?

A: Jurisdictions that have offices or measures on the ballot must be included in the voters' pamphlet unless a waiver is granted. Unless the office you are filing for is exempt from the Primary or your jurisdiction requests a waiver from participation in the voters' pamphlet due to financial hardship, you will be included in both the Primary and the General Election pamphlets. If no Primary is held for the office you are seeking, you will appear in the General Election pamphlet only.

Q: What must I do to get my photo and statement in the voters' pamphlet?

A: You will be informed of this at the time of filing. You will be given information about the specifications for both your photo and your statement. ***Please follow these specifications and observe the submittal deadline of May 27, 2016.***

Q: What information can the Elections Office provide candidates?

A: The Elections Office can provide the following information for a fee:

- Maps of individual precincts. Large district maps are available from [GIS](#) at 1300 Franklin Street, Vancouver. [Precinct maps](#) are also available on our website for free.
- Lists of registered voters by districts or precincts in electronic format.
- Lists of voters who have returned their voted mail ballots, in electronic format.
- Results of past elections.

Information that is provided for free at clarkvotes.org includes:

- Registration materials.
- 2016 Candidate Manual.
- Information about past elections.

More information regarding candidate filing procedures can be found at the secretary of state's website: www.secstate.wa.gov/elections/

Elections Office Contact Information:

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