

Election Steps for Candidates - Frequently Asked Questions

From the Clark County Auditor's Office

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This guide is published by the Auditor's Office for candidates planning to run for elective office. We hope that it will answer the most frequently asked questions. Please call our staff at (360) 397-2345 if you need more information.

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. This filing must include the filing fee, if one is required. Candidates for elective office may also file using the online candidate filing system. That system will be active from 9:00 AM, May 11 through 4:00 PM, May 15, 2015, and can be accessed by visiting the Elections Department website at **clarkvotes.org**.

Q: What are the qualifications for being a candidate?

A: Basic qualifications for most offices are simple. The candidate must be a registered voter currently residing in the jurisdiction in which she / he IS seeking elective office. For the city of Vancouver, there is a two year length of residency requirement and for the other cities located in Clark County there is a one year length of residency requirement. Candidates for school districts must live within the specific school district or director district for which they are filing. For County Councilor District 2 position, City of Camas or Port District commissioner, a candidate must also live within the internal district. For more specific information please refer to the Elections Guidelines pamphlet published by the Elections Office.

Q: When do I file as a candidate?

A: The "in person" filing period begins on Monday, May 11, 2015 and continues through Friday, May 15, 2015. In addition, filings will be accepted by mail if received no sooner than ten business days before the beginning of the filing period, which is April 27, and no later than the last day of filing, which is May 15.

Q: How do I file by mail?

A: Obtain a filing form by contacting the Clark County Elections Office at (360) 397-2345 or at elections@clark.wa.gov. A *Declaration of Candidacy* form may also be found on our website. Complete the form. If there is a filing fee, that fee must accompany the *Declaration of Candidacy* in order 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 valid, a filing must be received by the County 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 document, it is a good idea to call the Elections Department at (360) 397-2345 to make sure it was received.

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

A: Anyone may deliver your *Declaration of Candidacy* for you. But remember that if a friend or associate is given the document and then forgets to file it before the end of the filing period, you are not a candidate. If you do not bring the declaration in yourself, be sure that the filing fee, if any, is included.

Q: What happens during the week of filing when the *Declaration of Candidacy* form is submitted?

A: Office hours for filing are 8 AM until 5 PM. No in-person filings may be made except during those hours. The doors of the Elections Office will be unlocked at 8 AM and promptly locked at 5 PM. Declarations will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis during the day. The declaration will be checked for completeness. If the form is not complete, we will ask the candidate to complete the form. **Be sure to write the position or district number of the open position, if there is one.** There will be lists available which will give the positions subject to the election. The elections staff will look up the candidate's registration information by computer to verify that the information given is the same as that appearing on the registration file. An updated report listing all candidates who have filed will be available on a daily basis in the Elections Department and on our website at: <http://clarkvotes.org>. Online candidate filing begins at 9 AM, Monday, May 11, 2015, and ends at 4 PM, Friday, May 15, 2015. Online candidate filings can be done twenty-four hours a day during that period.

Q: What is the fee to file for office?

A: The fee is 1% of the annual salary. Refer to the [Offices Open for Filing](#) on this website, which includes a list of offices open for filing, annual salaries and filing fees. If you are uncertain, call the Elections Department at (360) 397-2345.

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

A: State law provides that if a candidate lacks sufficient funds to pay the fee, the candidate may file a *Filing Fee Petition* containing 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 a "valid signature" in the context of 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. Therefore, if you want to run for Vancouver City Council, only voters registered in the city of Vancouver may sign your petition.

Q: Where do I get the *Filing Fee Petition* pages?

A: The Elections Department has this form. One page will be given to a candidate. Copying must be done at the candidate's expense.

Q: When do I turn in the signature petition?

A: The *Filing Fee Petition* pages must be presented when you file your *Declaration of Candidacy* during the week of filing. The *Declaration* will be accepted provisionally. That is, if there are not sufficient valid signatures, the filing will not be accepted and your name will not be placed on the ballot.

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 all money or all signatures. State law makes no provision for a combination of both.

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

A: Come into the Elections Department before the closing of the filing period and complete a *Withdrawal of Candidacy* form for the position for which you no longer wish to run. Then 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 first filing fee paid may not 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: Candidates may withdraw their candidacy no later than Monday, May 18, by filing a *Withdrawal of Candidacy* form with the Elections Department, 1408 Franklin Street, Vancouver. **The filing fee is not refundable**. If a candidate decides to withdraw after this deadline, it is too late to have their name removed from the ballot administratively.

Q: What if no one files for one of the offices subject to election?

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 3-day filing period will normally occur during the week after the last day to file for office. Only those offices for which no filing was received will be open for filing during the *special filing period*.

Q: When do Public Disclosure laws consider me a candidate?

A: According to state Public Disclosure law, a person becomes a candidate when one of the following events occurs: the candidate publicly announces their candidacy, begins collecting or spending money for a campaign, contracts for campaign goods or services, or officially files for office during filing week. PDC forms must be filed within fourteen days of becoming a candidate.

Q: What are the public disclosure requirements?

A: Public disclosure requirements will vary according to the size of the jurisdiction in which you are a candidate and the amount of money which you plan to spend. For jurisdictions of more than 5,000 registered voters, the Registration: Candidate / Candidate Committee - (C-1) form and the Personal Financial Affairs Statement - F-1 form are both required.

Q: Where do I get the PDC forms? What if I need help in filling out the forms?

A: PDC forms may be obtained from the PDC in Olympia, including their website at www.pdc.wa.gov. If you need help in filling out the PDC forms, we suggest you contact the PDC. If you have been unable to find an answer to your specific question in the instruction booklet, you probably need specialized advice that the Elections Department would not be able to provide. The PDC phone number is 1-360-753-1111 or toll-free 1-877-601-2828. **See the PDC website for more details: www.pdc.wa.gov.**

Q: Where do I send the completed Public Disclosure forms?

A: Send the original to the PDC in Olympia. The address is: Public Disclosure Commission, P.O. Box 40908, Olympia, WA 98504-0908. Public disclosure forms can be completed and submitted online with the Public Disclosure Commission. Their website is listed above for more information.

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

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

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

A: Jurisdictions that have offices or measures on the ballot will be required to participate in the county-produced voters' pamphlet unless a waiver is granted. Information concerning participation in the pamphlet is sent to county jurisdictions in January of the election year. Therefore, unless the office you are filing for is exempt from the Primary or the jurisdiction in which you are seeking an office requests a waiver from participation in the voters' pamphlet due to financial hardship, you will be included in both the Primary and General Election pamphlet. 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 photo specifications and the accepted format and length of the candidate's statement. ***Please follow these specifications and observe the announced deadline.***

Q: What kinds of information or services can the Elections Department provide for candidates?

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

- Maps of individual precincts. (Large maps of districts are available from the [Assessor's Office, G.I.S. Division](#) located at 1300 Franklin St., Vancouver). The precinct maps are also available on our website at <http://clarkvotes.org>.
- 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.

An estimate of fees will be provided upon request.

Information or services that are provided free include:

- Registration materials.
- *2015 Election Guidelines* booklet (located on our website) – *available approximately April 1, 2015.*
- PDC forms and instruction booklets (located on the PDC website)
- Access to various information regarding past elections.

More information regarding candidate filing procedures can be found at the Secretary of State web site: www.secstate.wa.gov/elections/

Greg Kimsey, County Auditor

Elections Department Contact Information:

*County Elections Department
1408 Franklin Street
PO Box 8815
Vancouver, WA 98666-8815
Phone: (360) 397-2345
Fax: (360) 397-2394
Website: clarkvotes.org
Email: elections@clark.wa.gov*