



NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Unaffiliated Candidates for Election

1) **What steps are required for a person to have his or her name printed on the ballot for a general election without being affiliated with a political party?**¹

The prospective candidate should first obtain and complete a [petition request form](#). This form serves two functions: 1) it enables the appropriate board of elections to register the petition for processing, and 2) it guides the petitioner through the legal requirements for a successful petition. Once the form is completed, it should be submitted to the board of elections that has jurisdiction over the contest (petitioner must include physical residential address on the request form).

Once the petitioner has completed and submitted the petition request form, **the board of elections will provide a recommended template of the petition signature pages to be circulated.** The petitioner must collect the required number of signatures and return the petition signatures sheets prior to the statutory deadline (listed below). The board of elections will verify that the signatures are of eligible registered voters and inform the petitioner whether he or she has qualified. An individual who successfully qualifies as an unaffiliated candidate will be listed on the ballot for the general election.

Before gathering signatures, petitioners should check with the relevant board of elections to inquire about eligibility requirements for signers, which vary by contest.

The number of petition signatures required, the due date for the petitions, and the appropriate elections board with jurisdiction are determined by the type of office sought:²

A. Statewide Offices (Governor, Council of State, Supreme Court, and Court of Appeals).

The first step for the petitioner is to obtain a [petition request form](#) and submit it to the State Board of Elections.

¹ Unaffiliated candidates nominated by petition: [N.C.G.S. § 163-122](#).

² Procedure for Having Name Printed on Ballot as Unaffiliated Candidate. N.C.G.S. § 163-122(a).

- Petitions for these offices must be signed by qualified North Carolina registered voters equaling 1.5% of the total number of North Carolinians who voted in the most recent general election for Governor. [In 2024, the number of required signatures will be **83,188** signatures]; and
- Petitions for these offices must also be signed by at least **200** registered voters from each of three congressional districts in North Carolina.

The petitioner must file signature pages with the State Board of Elections by noon on the day of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is 12:00 noon on **March 5, 2024**. Petition signature pages must be separated by the county in which the signatures were obtained and designated accordingly.

The chair of the county board of elections for each separate county will then verify the signatures and ensure that each signer is qualified and registered to vote in the chair's county. The chair of each county board of elections must complete the verification and return the petition and a signed certificate of the results of his or her examination of the signatures to the State Board of Elections no later than 15 business days after canvass of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is **April 8, 2024**.

B. District Offices under the jurisdiction of the State Board (U.S. House; North Carolina House and Senate offices for districts that cover more than one county; district attorney, regardless of whether the district covers more than one county).

The first step for the petitioner is to obtain a petition request form and submit it to the State Board of Elections.

- Petitions for General Assembly seats where the district lies in more than one county must be signed by qualified voters in the district equaling 4% of the total number of registered voters in that district as of January 1 of the election year.³
- Petitions for district offices *other than* General Assembly seats must be signed by qualified voters in the district equaling 1.5% of the total number of registered voters in that district as of January 1 of the election year.⁴

³ This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2024. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2023 data and should expect revision of the number after January 2024.

⁴ This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2024. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2023 data and should expect revision of the number after January 2024.

The petitioner must file signature pages with the State Board of Elections by noon on the day of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is 12:00 noon on **March 5, 2024**. Petition signature pages must be separated by the county in which the signatures were obtained and designated accordingly.

The chair of the county board of elections for each separate county will then verify the signatures and ensure that each signer is qualified and registered to vote in the chair's county. The chair of each county board of elections must complete the verification and return the petition and a signed certificate of the results of his or her examination of the signatures to the State Board of Elections no later than 15 business days after canvass of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is **April 8, 2024**.

C. District offices for State House and Senate that lie within a single county and county offices (such as Sheriff, Register of Deeds, and County Commissioner). The first step for the petitioner is to obtain a [petition request form](#) and submit it to the involved county board of elections.

- Petitions for these offices must be signed by qualified voters in the county equaling 4% of the total number of registered voters in the county as of January 1 of the election year.⁵
- If the office is for a district consisting of less than the entire county and only the voters in that district vote for that office, then the petition must be signed by qualified voters in that district equaling 4% of the total number of registered voters in the district as of January 1 of the election year.⁶

The petitioner must file signature pages with the county board of elections by noon on the day of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is 12:00 noon on **March 5, 2024**.

The chair or director of the county board of elections will verify the signatures and ensure that each signer is qualified and registered to vote in the county or district, as applicable. The county board of elections must then verify and return a copy of the petition, along with a certificate of the results of the examination of the signatures, to the person who presented the petition to the county board of elections no later than 15 business days after canvass of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is **April 8, 2024**.

⁵ This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2024. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2023 data and should expect revision of the number after January 2024.

⁶ This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2024. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2023 data and should expect revision of the number after January 2024.

D. District Court and Superior Court Judges.

The first step for the petitioner is to obtain a [petition request form](#) and submit it to the State Board of Elections.

Petitions for these offices:

- are filed with the State Board regardless of whether the district lies entirely in one county or in more than one county; and
- must be signed by qualified voters in the district equaling 2% of the total number of registered voters in that district as reflected by the State Board's voter registration records as of January 1 of the general election year.⁷

The petitioner must file signature pages with the State Board of Elections by noon on the day of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is 12:00 noon on **March 5, 2024**. Petition signature pages must be separated by the county in which the signatures were obtained and designated accordingly.

The chair of the county board of elections for each separate county will then verify the signatures and ensure that each signer is qualified and registered to vote in the chair's county. The chair of each county board of elections must complete the verification and return the petition and a signed certificate of the results of his or her examination of the signatures to the State Board of Elections no later than 15 business days after canvass of the primary. In 2024, this deadline is **April 8, 2024**.

E. Partisan municipal office.

The first step for the petitioner is to obtain a [petition request form](#) and submit it to the appropriate county board of elections (i.e., in the county wherein the municipality is located).

Petitions for these offices must be signed by qualified voters in the district equaling 1.5% of the total number of voters qualified to vote in the municipal election as of January 1 of the election year.⁸ The petition must be filed by noon on the Friday before the seventh Saturday before the election.⁹

* *North Carolina municipalities have different election dates.* Interested persons should inquire with the [county board of elections](#) that has jurisdiction over the

⁷ This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2024. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2023 data and should expect revision of the number after January 2024.

⁹ N.C.G.S. § [163-122](#); [163-296](#).

municipal election in question to determine what date matches the petition deadline for that municipality.

2) Is there a filing fee to run as an unaffiliated candidate?¹⁰

Yes. For most offices, the filing fee is 1% of the annual salary of the elected office.¹¹

3) What is the date of the General Election?

The Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In 2024, Election Day is **November 5, 2024**.

4) May I run as an unaffiliated candidate even if I am affiliated *as a voter* with a political party?

Yes. An unaffiliated candidate means that your *candidacy* is not affiliated with a political party. Your *voter registration affiliation* does not affect your eligibility to be an unaffiliated candidate.

5) What are the campaign reporting requirements?¹²

IMPORTANT: An individual who has received funds or made payments for the purpose of bringing about that individual's nomination or election for office – or an individual who has given consent for anyone else to receive funds or make payments for that same purpose – is required to organize a candidate political committee. If a candidate pays for a good or service to support a petition effort or gives consent for anyone else to pay for a good to service to support a petition effort, a candidate political committee must be organized.

A treasurer must be appointed for each candidate committee. A candidate may serve as their own treasurer. However, a candidate's spouse is not eligible to serve. Treasurers must complete a mandatory training program provided by the State Board within three months of appointment.

Within 10 days of organizing the candidate committee, the treasurer must file an organizational report. An organizational report includes the CRO-2100A Statement of Organization, CRO-3500 Certification of Financial Account Information and an organizational disclosure report that discloses all contributions and expenditures received to date.

¹⁰ Filing Fees for unaffiliated candidates are equal to those for candidates in a primary. N.C.G.S. § [163-122\(e\)](#).

¹¹ For county offices compensated partly by salary and partly by fees, the amount of the filing fee is 1% of the first annual salary to be received (exclusive of fees): § [163-107\(a\)](#).

¹² See Article 22A of Chapter 163.

Candidates for county offices, municipal offices, local school boards, soil and water conservation districts, and sanitary districts may be exempt from filing disclosure reports if the committee determines that it does not intend to receive in contributions or in loans or spend more than \$1,000 during the election cycle.¹³ In order to qualify for the exemption, the treasurer must file a [CRO-3600 Certification of Threshold](#) at the same time the committee files the remainder of the organizational report.

Candidate committees that are not under threshold are required to file regular campaign finance disclosure reports. Candidates for State and county offices file reports according to the schedule in G.S. § 163-278.9. Candidates for municipal offices follow the schedules in G.S. § 163-278.40B-E. Reporting schedules can also be obtained from the State Board's website and/or your county board of elections. Questions regarding disclosure forms and reporting can be directed to campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov.

6) Disclosure of economic interest is also required of *nonfederal* candidates¹⁴

The State Government Ethics Act requires that candidates for an office covered by the Act file a Statement of Economic Interest with the State Ethics Commission. **An individual seeking to qualify as an unaffiliated candidate subject to the Act must file the Statement of Economic Interest within three days of filing the petition.** To inquire whether you are covered by this Act, please call 919-814-3600 and ask to speak with Ethics Commission staff about the Statement of Economic Interest.

7) CAVEAT regarding districts that may be affected by redistricting.

If a petition was started prior to new or redrawn districts becoming finalized and includes signatures of those who longer reside in the district as a result of the new district lines, the counties may only count signatures of those who reside in the new district. Further, if the petitioner is no longer living in the district because of the changed lines, he or she will not meet the requirements to be a candidate in that district.

¹³ Threshold of \$1,000 for financial reports for certain candidates: § 163-278.10A.

¹⁴ Statement of Economic Interest: § [138A-22\(d\)](#).