

Don't just stand there...



Drawing by Ruth Meyers Laider

A Candidate's Guide to the 2016 State Election

Published by

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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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Introduction

The information in this guide is general information regarding the process for running for office in state primaries and elections in Massachusetts. This information is not intended as legal advice. Please note that deadlines and qualifications contained herein are subject to change if state laws are changed.

Candidate's Resources

Massachusetts General Laws,
Chapters 50 - 56 are available
in local libraries and on the internet at
www.malegislature.gov

Regulations for certifying signatures:
950 CMR §55.00*

State Ethics Commission
One Ashburton Place, Room 619
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 371-9500
www.mass.gov/ethics

The Office of Campaign and Political Finance
One Ashburton Place, Room 411
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 979-8300 or 1-800-462-OCPF
www.ocpf.us

“Objections Before the State
Ballot Law Commission”*

* These materials are available from the
Elections Division or the State Bookstore,
State House, Boston, MA 02133
(617) 727-2834



Definitions

<i>Certificate of Voter Registration</i>	A certificate issued by the local election officials of a non-party candidate's city or town, which certifies that the candidate is a registered voter at his or her current address, and that the candidate has not been a member of a political party throughout the ninety days prior to the filing deadline with the Secretary of the Commonwealth.
<i>Congress</i>	A term used to describe the United States Senate and the House of Representatives, collectively. This term is sometimes used to refer specifically to the House of Representatives.
<i>County Office</i>	A public office elected by the registered voters in one of the fourteen counties in Massachusetts. County offices include sheriff and county commissioners.
<i>District Office</i>	A public office elected by the registered voters in a particular district of the state. Districts may include more than one municipality or part of a municipality. District offices include Governor's Councillors, State Senators and State Representatives.
<i>Enrollment Certificate</i>	A certificate issued by the local election officials of a party candidate's city or town, which certifies that the candidate is a registered voter at his or her current address, and that the candidate meets the party enrollment requirements for the office he or she seeks.
<i>Ethics Receipt</i>	A receipt given to the candidate by the State Ethics Commission upon submission of the candidate's Statement of Financial Interest. Ethics receipts must be submitted to the Secretary of the Commonwealth by the filing deadline in order for a candidate to qualify for ballot access. Federal candidates are exempt from this requirement.
<i>Federal Office</i>	A public office elected by the registered voters of a state or district to represent the voters in the United States government. Federal offices include Representative in Congress and Electors of President and Vice President.
<i>Local Election Officials</i>	The Board of Registrars or Board of Election Commissioners in each city or town. In most towns, the office of the local election official is the town clerk's office.
<i>Non-Party Candidate</i>	A candidate for public office who is not enrolled in any recognized political party in Massachusetts and who files nomination papers to appear directly on the November general election ballot. Non-party candidates may be unenrolled – commonly referred to as “independent” – or they may be registered with a political designation and may be referred to as “minor party” candidates. Non-party candidates must not have been enrolled in any political party throughout the ninety days prior to the first filing deadline with the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

<i>Party Candidate</i>	A candidate for public office who is enrolled in a recognized political party in Massachusetts. Party candidates must have been enrolled in the party whose nomination they seek throughout the ninety days prior to the filing deadline with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Party candidates must not have been enrolled in any other party for one year prior to the same filing deadline. Currently there are four recognized political parties in Massachusetts: Democratic, Republican, Green-Rainbow and United Independent Party.
<i>State Election</i>	A general election, in which registered voters choose people to fill public offices and vote on ballot questions, where applicable.
<i>State Primary</i>	An election in which registered voters nominate party candidates: Democratic, Republican, Green-Rainbow and United Independent Party. The names of the winners of the party primaries are placed upon the November general election ballot.
<i>Statement of Public Office</i>	A statement that may appear on state primary ballots beside a candidate's name, which lists public offices that the candidate holds or has held, but may be no longer than eight words. See page 13 for more information on statements of public office.
<i>Unenrolled</i>	A registered voter who is not enrolled in any political party or political designation is an unenrolled voter. Such voters are commonly referred to as "Independents." An unenrolled voter may qualify to have his or her name printed on the ballot only as a non-party candidate.
<i>Written Acceptance</i>	The signature of the candidate or an attorney authorized in writing by the candidate, which signifies the candidate's acceptance of the nomination.

Offices on the Ballot

FEDERAL OFFICES

Electors of President and Vice-President,
United States Representative (all 9 districts)

STATE OFFICES

Governor's Council (all 8 districts)
State Senator (all 40 districts)
State Representative (all 160 districts)

COUNTY OFFICES

County Commissioner (Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Norfolk and Plymouth only)
Council of Government Executive Committee (Franklin only)
Sheriff
Register of Deeds (Suffolk only)
District Attorney (Bristol only)

2016 State Election Dates

The state primaries will be held on THURSDAY, September 8, 2016.

The state election will be held on Tuesday, November 8, 2016.

2016 Massachusetts Election Calendar

Calendar of Events

Deadline Dates

	Party and Non-Party Candidates for District and County Offices	Party Candidates for Federal and Statewide Offices	Non-Party Candidates for Federal and Statewide Offices
<i>Nomination papers available*</i>	<i>February 16</i>	<i>February 16</i>	<i>February 16</i>
Last day for a person running in a state primary to enroll in a party or for a person running only in a state election to unenroll from a party except for newly registered voters.	March 1	March 8	March 8
<i>5 p.m. Last day and hour for submitting nomination papers to local election officials for certification of signatures.</i>	May 3	May 10	August 2
5 p.m. Last day and hour for local election officials to complete certification of signatures.	May 24	May 31	August 23
5 p.m. Last day and hour for candidates to apply for review of non-certified signatures.	May 26	June 2	August 25
5 p.m. Last day and hour for local election officials to complete review of non-certified signatures.	May 27	June 6	August 29
<i>5 p.m. Last day and hour for filing nomination papers (including party enrollment or voter registration certificate and Ethics Commission receipt) with the Secretary of the Commonwealth.</i>	<i>May 31</i>	<i>June 7</i>	<i>August 30</i>

* Nomination papers may be released earlier; check with the Elections Division.

Calendar of Events

Deadline Dates

	Party and Non-Party Candidates for District and County Offices	Party Candidates for Federal and Statewide Offices	Non-Party Candidates for Federal and Statewide Offices
5 p.m. Last day and hour for filing withdrawals of or objections to nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth.	June 3	June 10	September 2
5 p.m. Last day and hour for filling vacancies caused by withdrawals.	June 8	June 15	September 8

ALL DATES and DEADLINES are the SAME FOR ALL CANDIDATES FROM THIS POINT

Last day to register voters and to change party enrollment for the state primaries: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (except in towns under 1,500 voters – 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.)

August 19

STATE PRIMARIES

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2016*

5 p.m. Last day and hour for filing a written acceptance by write-in or sticker candidates who won a state primary.

September 12

12 p.m. Last day and hour for filing withdrawals of or objections to nominations at the state primaries.

September 13

5 p.m. Last day and hour for filling vacancies caused by withdrawals at the state primaries.

September 14

Last day to register voters for the state election: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (except in towns under 1,500 voters – 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.)

October 19

STATE ELECTION

NOVEMBER 8

* The date of the 2016 state primary was changed pursuant to Section 67 of Chapter 119 of the Acts of 2015. This date and any other date contained herein may be changed by laws passed by the General Court after the publication of this booklet. Please contact the Elections Division to inquire of any further changes.

Age, Residence and Signature Requirements to Run for Office

- ★ You must be at least 18 years old (*exception: U.S. Representative – 25 years old*).
- ★ You must be a registered voter in Massachusetts.
- ★ You must fulfill the residence and signature requirements below.

Office	Residence Requirements Prior to Date of Election	Signatures Required for Nomination Papers ¹
FOR FEDERAL OFFICE*		
U.S. Representative (<i>25 years old</i>)	United States citizen for 7 years, inhabitant of Massachusetts when elected	2,000
FOR STATE DISTRICT OFFICE		
Governor's Councillor	5 years in Massachusetts	1,000
State Senator	5 years in Massachusetts, inhabitant of district when elected	300
State Representative	one year in district	150

* ELECTORS OF PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT FOR NON-PARTY CANDIDATES (including Unenrolled, Minor Party, or Political Designation) need 10,000 signatures. For information about running for President, see *How to Run for President in Massachusetts 2016* which can be found at: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepres/pres2016idx.htm.

Office	Residence Requirements Prior to Date of Election	Signatures Required for Nomination Papers ¹
FOR COUNTY OFFICE		
District Attorney ⁵ <i>(must be member of Massachusetts Bar)</i>	resident in district	1,000
County Commissioner, ² or Franklin Council of Government Committee <i>(Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Norfolk and Plymouth only)</i>	(no requirement)	1,000 ^{3,4}
Register of Deeds ⁵	resident in district	1,000 ^{3,4}
Sheriff	(no requirement)	1,000 ^{3,4}

1. State party rules may impose additional requirements on party candidates.
For more information, contact:

Massachusetts Democratic Party
77 Summer Street, 10th Floor
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 939-0800

Green-Rainbow Party
232 Highland Ave.,
Arlington, MA 02476
(413) 650-6542

Massachusetts Republican Party
85 Merrimac Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 523-5005

United Independent Party
44 School Street, Suite 250,
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 564-3181

2. Not more than one commissioner may be elected from the same city or town in the county.
3. Dukes and Nantucket candidates for county office need only 25 signatures.
4. Barnstable, Berkshire, Franklin and Hampshire candidates for county office, except District Attorney, need only 500 signatures.
5. To fill vacancies only.

Getting On The Ballot

Candidates gain access to the November 8, 2016 general election ballot in one of the following two ways:

- A candidate who is a member of a party may be nominated in the state primary; OR
- A non-party candidate may run in the state election only.

To have his or her name printed on a state primary ballot, a party candidate must submit nomination papers. Similarly, a non-party candidate must submit nomination papers to qualify to have his or her name printed on the state election ballot.

Please be aware that a candidate may only qualify in one of the above ways. A candidate must fulfill specific enrollment requirements when running for office.

For each office, state law has assigned a minimum number of certified signatures required for ballot access and set specific deadlines for submission and filing of nomination papers. Candidates are responsible for complying with all state laws relative to ballot access.

Nomination Papers

Availability

Nomination papers are available from the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth in the Boston, Fall River, and Springfield offices, and may be picked up or requested by telephone or in writing.

Candidates may make exact copies of the official nomination papers for gathering signatures. Papers that have been altered in any way, including papers that are not printed two-sided, will not be accepted.

Nomination papers for party candidates are white in color, while nomination papers for non-party candidates are yellow. Nomination papers for non-party candidates for Electors of President and Vice President are beige. Candidates should ensure that they have chosen the correct nomination papers before gathering signatures.

Required Information

The candidate's name, residence, political party or designation, the office for which the candidate is running, and the district in which he or she is running must be placed on the nomination papers **BEFORE** any signatures are gathered. These areas of the nomination papers are highlighted in gray. If any information is missing from the gray areas of the paper, **no signatures on these papers can be counted.**

The candidate's residence must include the candidate's street name and number, if any, and some clearly identifiable reference to the city or town. To avoid confusion, this Office recommends using the full name of the city or town in which the candidate resides.

Certified signatures contained on nomination papers missing any of this information cannot be counted.

Time of Filing

All candidates seeking to have their name printed on the ballot, either the state primary ballot or state election ballot, must file nomination papers according to the following schedule.

Nomination papers for party and non-party candidates for district and county office must be submitted to local election officials for certification of names no later than 5 p.m. on May 3, 2016. The papers must then be picked up from the local election officials and filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth no later than 5 p.m. on May 31, 2016.

Party candidates for federal offices have one additional week to circulate papers. Nomination papers for party candidates for federal office must be submitted to local election officials for certification of names no later than 5 p.m. on May 10, 2016. The papers must then be picked up from the local election officials and filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth no later than 5 p.m. on June 7, 2016.

Non-party candidates for federal offices have additional time to circulate papers. Nomination papers for non-party candidates for federal office must be submitted to local election officials for certification of names no later than 5 p.m. on August 2, 2016. The papers must then be picked up from the local election officials and filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth no later than 5 p.m. on August 30, 2016.

File Early

If possible, it is recommended that candidates file early, prior to the deadline for submitting papers to local election officials. This allows time for errors to be identified and for candidates to gather additional signatures, if necessary.

How to Run in a Party Primary

Enrollment requirements

Party candidates for nomination in state primaries must be enrolled members of the party whose nomination they seek and, except for newly registered voters, must be enrolled members of the party throughout the 90 days before the deadline for filing nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. In addition, no person shall be printed on the ballot as a candidate for nomination by one party if that person was enrolled in any other party during the one year period preceding the filing date for this election.

Certificate of Enrollment

Party candidates must PROVE party affiliation by filing with the Secretary of the Commonwealth a certificate of party enrollment signed or stamped by at least three local election officials of the city or town where the candidate is a registered voter. At least one such certificate, which is printed on the nomination papers, must be completed and filed no later than the last day for filing nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. No candidate's name may appear on a primary ballot without this certificate of enrollment.

Primary Nomination Papers

Primary nomination papers will place a party candidate's name on the Democratic, Republican, Green-Rainbow or United Independent Party primary ballot. These papers are white in color.

Name on Ballot Once

Party candidates may not have their name printed on a state primary ballot for nomination for more than one office. They may circulate and file nomination papers for more than one office, but if they do not withdraw from all but one office by the deadline date for withdrawals, that party candidate's name will not be printed on the ballot at all.

Fill in Required Information

The proper title of the office, district name, name and residence* of the candidate and political party affiliation must be printed or typed, correctly spelled and in the proper place on the front of each nomination paper BEFORE signatures are solicited. Any nomination paper filed without all of this information will not be counted (gray areas on nomination papers).

*Residence must include the candidate's street name and number, if any, and the city or town or some clearly identifiable reference to the city or town. To avoid confusion, this Office recommends using the full name of the city or town.

Statement of Public Office

There is space on the nomination paper where a party candidate may make a statement in not more than eight words listing public offices** they hold or previously held. If they are a former incumbent, the word “former” must be used. If the candidate is now an elected incumbent seeking the same nomination, they may include the phrase “candidate for re-nomination.” The word “veteran” may be used if the candidate is a veteran as defined in section 1 of chapter 31 of the General Laws.

The statement submitted on the primary nomination papers will appear only on the primary ballot. ***The only statement which may appear on the state election ballot is “candidate for re-election,”*** which will appear after a candidate’s name who is an elected incumbent.

Written Acceptance

Before filing the papers, the candidate should ensure that at least one of the certified nomination papers contains a written acceptance of nomination personally signed by either the candidate or an attorney authorized by the candidate in writing. Although the candidate does not have to sign the acceptance space on all nomination papers, the candidate should sign several certified papers to be sure that ONE of the papers which is ultimately filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth will have the written acceptance on it.

Receipt from State Ethics Commission

For the papers to be valid, the candidate must also file a receipt from the State Ethics Commission showing that they have filed a statement of financial interest with them, unless they are a candidate for federal office. The receipt must be filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth by the filing deadline. Forms and instructions for the statement of financial interest may be obtained from the State Ethics Commission, One Ashburton Place, Room 619, Boston, MA 02108, or call (617) 371-9500.

Number of Signatures

A candidate’s name will appear on the ballot only if they file nomination papers with the number of certified signatures as required on pages 8 and 9.

Who May Sign

Primary nomination papers may be signed only by registered voters who are enrolled in the SAME political party as the candidate or who are not enrolled in any party (unenrolled) or enrolled in a political designation. Other signatures will be disallowed.

On to the State Election

Winners of the party primaries will be the party candidates in the election.

**Not every government employee holds a “public office.” Holders of public office must have entrusted to them in some degree the exercise of the power and authority of government. The duties must not be merely clerical, but must involve the exercise of some significant discretion or judgment. The position must not be merely advisory or a political party position. The position must be one which is established by law. A political party position is not a “public office.”

How to Run as a Non-Party Candidate in the Election

Non-Party Candidates

Candidates who are not enrolled in any political party (sometimes referred to as unenrolled, independent, minor-party candidates or political designation) must also circulate nomination papers. These papers will put candidates' names directly on the state election ballot in November. These candidates do not run in the state primaries. Nomination papers are either yellow or beige, depending on the office sought.

Must be Unenrolled

Non-party candidates cannot be enrolled in any political party in order to qualify to have their name printed directly on the general election ballot. Furthermore, non-party candidates seeking to have their name printed on the ballot for the state election cannot have been enrolled in a political party between **March 1, 2016** (if they are a candidate for district or county office) or **March 8, 2016** (if they are a candidate for federal office) **and the deadline for filing nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth.**

Certificate of Voter Registration

Non-party candidates seeking to have their name printed on the ballot must file a certificate proving that they are a registered voter and have not been enrolled in a political party during the proper period before the deadline for filing nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth (see section above). At least one of these certificates of registration, which are printed on the nomination papers, must be signed or stamped by at least three local election officials of the city or town where the candidate is a registered voter and filed no later than the last day for filing nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. No non-party candidate's name may be printed on the general election ballot without this voter registration certificate.

Fill in Required Information

The proper title of the office, district name, residence* of the candidate and political designation must be printed or typed, correctly spelled and in the proper place on each nomination paper, BEFORE signatures are solicited. Any nomination paper filed without all this information will not be counted (gray areas on nomination papers).

* Residence must include the candidate's street name and number, if any, and the city or town or some clearly identifiable reference to the city or town. To avoid confusion, this Office recommends using the full name of the city or town.

Designation

Non-party candidates may state their political designation in no more than three words. Non-party candidates may NOT use the words “Democratic,” “Republican,” “Green-Rainbow,” or “United Independent Party” as part of their designation on the nomination papers. If a non-party candidate places no political designation on their papers, the designation “unenrolled” will appear on the ballot. If a non-party candidate circulates and files papers with different political designations, those papers will be counted separately.

Written Acceptance

Before filing the papers, candidates should be sure that at least one of the certified nomination papers contains a written acceptance of nomination personally signed by either the candidate or an attorney authorized by the candidate in writing. Although the candidate does not have to sign the acceptance space on all nomination papers, the candidate should sign several certified papers to be sure that ONE of the papers which is ultimately filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth will have the written acceptance on it.

Receipt from State Ethics Commission

For non-party papers to be valid, a candidate must also file a receipt from the State Ethics Commission showing that they have filed a statement of financial interest with them, unless they are a candidate for federal office. The receipt must be filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth by the filing deadline. Forms and instructions for the statement of financial interest may be obtained from the State Ethics Commission, One Ashburton Place, Room 619, Boston, MA 02108, or call (617) 371-9500.

Number of Signatures

A non-party candidate’s name will appear on the ballot only if they file nomination papers with the number of certified signatures as required on pages 8 and 9.

Who May Sign

Nomination papers for non-party candidates may be signed by any registered voter.

Signatures on Nomination Papers

Procedures

The procedures described below are essentially the same for papers for both party and non-party candidates. To be certified, all signatures on nomination papers must be legible and signed in person with the name substantially as registered, with the address at which they are registered. Signers must use street addresses, and not mailing addresses such as post office box numbers.

How Voter's Name Should Be Written

The law allows a voter to insert or omit a middle name or initial. A married woman should sign "Helen Smith" not "Mrs. John Smith." Do not use nicknames or initials in place of given names. To avoid legal objections it is wise to consult a voting list if available and sign as registered. Voters who are unsure of the way they are registered may sign in different ways on consecutive lines (with addresses each time) and the registrar will then certify only the valid name. The law directs registrars to certify the signature if they can reasonably determine the identity of the voter from the form of the signature.

Voter Must Sign for Self

Persons who are prevented from signing by physical disability may authorize another individual to sign for them in the voter's presence.

No person may sign for another unless the voter is physically disabled as above. One spouse may not sign for another.

Count How Many Signed

A voter may sign once for each candidate for an office. If a voter signs more than once for the same candidate, that voter's name will be certified only once. Additional signatures will be disallowed. Voters may sign for as many different candidates as they wish, even for the same office.

Another Municipality, Another Paper

Each nomination paper should contain signatures of registered voters from only ONE city or town. At least three of the registrars of the city or town where the signers are registered voters may certify that each signature is that of a registered voter in their jurisdiction. Names from other communities on that sheet will be disallowed. If a candidate is running for an office in a district that crosses city or town lines, separate nomination papers should be circulated and submitted to each community.

Collect Extra Signatures

Candidates should collect more signatures than required because many may be disallowed either in the certification process or through challenges. Registrars are required by law to certify two-fifths more than the number of signatures required.

Review Procedures for Signatures Not Certified

If the total number of signatures certified by the registrar is less than 10% in excess of the number required for the office that the candidate seeks, the candidate may request a review by the registrars of signatures not certified. The request for review must be submitted to the registrars no later than 48 hours after their deadline for certifying the papers, and before the papers have been removed from the office of the local election official. A list of those signatures must be presented to the registrars, who must complete their review no later than 24 hours before the filing deadline with the Secretary of the Commonwealth (see calendar).

Objections

Challenges

A candidate's nomination may be challenged by a registered voter of the district within three days following the date for filing nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Written objections to nominations are filed with the State Ballot Law Commission at the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Elections Division. For details see "Objections Before the State Ballot Law Commission," a publication available from the Elections Division.

Reasons for Challenge

There are many reasons for a challenge. Past challenges have included: forged signatures, candidate does not meet legal requirements, signers not registered voters.

Hearing

When an objection is filed, the candidate receives notice in writing that a hearing will be held before the State Ballot Law Commission. It is advisable to have a lawyer present since the hearing often involves technical requirements. The Elections Division can provide further information about the procedure.

Penalties

Penalties

The law provides for a penalty of not more than \$50 for subscribing falsely to a statement on a primary nomination paper. The act of falsely or willfully altering the designation of the district after signatures have been certified, or for falsely making or willfully altering, defacing, mutilating, destroying, suppressing or unlawfully signing, or filing a nomination paper is punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not more than one year.

Campaign Finance

The law requires that campaign expenses and contributions be reported by candidates seeking election at every level of government. The Director of the Office of Campaign and Political Finance is responsible for receiving and maintaining records for all candidates in the primaries and election, except candidates for federal office. Candidates for state office may obtain detailed information on reporting procedures, dates and other guidance regarding the campaign finance law from the Director of the Office of Campaign and Political Finance. That office may be reached at:

One Ashburton Place, Room 411
Boston, MA 02108.
(617) 979-8300 or 1-800-462-OCPF
ocpf@cpf.state.ma.us
www.ocpf.us

Candidates for federal office file with the Federal Election Commission:

999 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20463
1-800-424-9530
www.fec.gov

Statements of Financial Interest

The Financial Disclosure Law requires every candidate for public office to file a Statement of Financial Interests (“SFI”) for the prior calendar year with the State Ethics Commission. For SFI purposes, a “public office” is a position for which a person is nominated at a state primary or chosen at a state election. Candidates for the district and county offices are required to file an SFI.

Candidates for federal office, such as Representative in Congress, are not required to file an SFI.

Candidates for public office must file an SFI with the State Ethics Commission on or prior to the deadline for filing certified nomination papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s Office and thereafter must also file the receipt from the Commission as proof of the SFI filing.

An SFI can be filed electronically or manually. Questions regarding the filing of an SFI should be directed to the State Ethics Commission:

State Ethics Commission
One Ashburton Place, Room 619
Boston, MA 02108-1501
617-371-9500
www.mass.gov/ethics

Signature Check List

- Get signatures from ONE city or town ONLY on each nomination paper. Make certain that signers can vote for the candidate. Signatures from another city or town or across district lines will not be counted. District boundaries may be checked on the list of districts available from the Secretary of the Commonwealth.
- All signatures must be legible and written substantially as registered. The law allows a voter to insert or omit a middle name or initial and still have the signature deemed valid. Do not use nicknames or initials in place of full names. Married women should sign “Helen Smith” not “Mrs. John Smith.” It is wise to have a list of registered voters or a street listing with you to verify the exact form of registration. City and town clerks are required by law to make one copy of these available free to candidates. The law provides, that if the registrars can determine the identity of the voter from the form of the signature, the signature must be certified.
- Nominating petitions require the voter’s present address. Signers must use street addresses, not mailing addresses such as post office box numbers.
- If a voter signs incorrectly or makes any error, do not erase or make changes. Leave the incorrect line intact and ask the voter to sign again on the next line. An altered or illegible signature may be disallowed or challenged.
- To be certified on primary nomination papers, signers must be members of the candidate’s party or not enrolled in any party.
- Be sure to collect and submit more signatures than the required number because many may be disqualified.
- Don’t miss the deadline date for submitting nomination papers to local election officials for certification. The deadlines for candidates for federal office are later than those for candidates for other offices; check both sets of deadline dates carefully. Try to get papers to local registrars earlier than the deadline if possible.
- Submit more than the required number of signatures to your local election officials for certification. If many signatures are challenged or disallowed, you may fall short of the required number. Be sure the signatures are from the proper district and party, with the name and address properly filled in.
- If you have fewer than 10% above the number of signatures required for the office you seek, you may consider requesting a review by local registrars of signatures not certified.

Candidate's Check List

- Be certain you are a registered voter in the district from which you plan to run.
- Check the deadline for filing nomination papers for the office you seek in the calendar on pages 6 and 7 and in the section "Nomination Papers" on pages 10 and 11.
- Review the election calendar on pages 6 and 7. Note the days and dates carefully; consider holidays.
- Obtain white nomination papers to run in the primary, or yellow, or beige to run as a non-party candidate in the election. **Fill in the top portion of nomination papers carefully with name and address (including street name and number and city or town), office, district, party or political designation, etc., BEFORE** you circulate the papers. Any nomination paper filed without this information will not be counted (gray areas on nomination papers).
- Be sure to sign the written acceptance line on a number of your nomination papers. For primary papers, fill in your statement of public offices you hold or have held if you wish to do so.
- Don't miss the deadline date for submitting nomination papers to local election officials for certification. The deadlines for candidates for federal and statewide office are later than those for candidates for other offices; check both sets of deadline dates carefully. Try to get papers to local election officials earlier than the deadline if possible.
- Submit more than the required number of signatures to your local election officials for certification. If many signatures are challenged or disallowed, you may fall short of the required number. Be sure the signatures are from the proper district and party, with the name and address properly filled in.
- If you have fewer than 10% above the number of signatures required for the office you seek, you may consider requesting a review by local election officials of signatures not certified.
- Pick up the certified papers from the local election officials and don't miss the deadline for filing with the Secretary of the Commonwealth.
- Be sure to file at least one paper with your certificate of enrollment or certificate of voter registration signed by at least three of your local election officials.
- Be sure to file the receipt from the State Ethics Commission (except candidates for federal office).
- After the papers are filed you may wish to check the papers of other candidates to see if there is any reason for challenge.