



# NORTH CAROLINA

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## STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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### *Unaffiliated Candidates for Election*

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- 1) What steps are required for a person to have their name printed on the ballot for a general election as a candidate who is not shown as being affiliated with a political party? <sup>1</sup>

**The prospective candidate should first obtain and complete a petition request form.**<sup>2</sup> 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 template of the petition signature pages to be circulated by the petitioner.** The petitioner must collect the required number of signatures and return the petition signature sheets prior to the statutory deadline (listed below). The board of elections will verify that the signers of the petition are registered voters who are eligible to sign the petition and inform the petitioner whether they have qualified to be listed on the ballot as an unaffiliated candidate .

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

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

<sup>2</sup> The petition request form can be downloaded at <https://www.ncsbe.gov/candidates/petitions>.

The number of required petition signatures, the due date for the petitions, and the board of elections with jurisdiction over the petition are determined by the type of office sought:<sup>3</sup>

**A. U.S. Senate; NC Supreme Court Justice and NC Court of Appeals Judge.**

- Where to submit the petition request form: the State Board of Elections.
- Number of signatures needed: **83,874** qualified North Carolina registered voters (1.5% of the total number of North Carolinians who voted in the 2024 general election for Governor) and at least **200** registered voters from three different congressional districts in North Carolina.
- Deadline for petitioner to file signature pages with the State Board: 12:00 noon on **March 3, 2026** (the day of the 2026 primary). Petition signature pages must be separated by the county in which the signatures were obtained and designated accordingly. The county boards will then verify the signatures.
- Deadline for the county boards to verify signatures: **April 6, 2026** (15 business days after canvass of the primary).

**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).**

- Where to submit the petition request form: the State Board of Elections.
- Number of signatures needed for General Assembly seats: 4% of the total number of registered voters in that district as of January 1 of the election year.<sup>4</sup>
- Number of signatures needed for district offices *other than* General Assembly seats: 1.5% of the total number of registered voters in that district as of January 1 of the election year.<sup>5</sup>
- Deadline for petitioner to file signature pages with the State Board: 12:00 noon on **March 3, 2026** (the day of the 2026 primary). Petition signature pages must be separated by the county in which the signatures were obtained and designated accordingly. The county boards will then verify the signatures.
- Deadline for the county boards to verify signatures: **April 6, 2026** (15 business days after canvass of the primary).

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<sup>3</sup> Procedure for Having Name Printed on Ballot as Unaffiliated Candidate. N.C.G.S. § 163-122(a).

<sup>4</sup> This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2026. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2025 data and should expect changes to the number in January 2026.

<sup>5</sup> This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2026. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2025 data and should expect changes to the number in January 2026.

**C. District offices under a county board’s jurisdiction (North Carolina House and Senate offices for districts that lie within a single county; county offices, such as sheriff and county commissioner).**

- Where to submit the petition request form: the county board of elections.
- Number of signatures needed if the district is the entire county: 4% of the total number of registered voters in the county as of January 1 of the election year.<sup>6</sup>
- Number of signatures needed if the district is less than the entire county and only the voters in that district vote for that office: 4% of the total number of registered voters in the district as of January 1 of the election year.<sup>7</sup>
- Deadline for petitioner to file signature pages with the county board: 12:00 noon on **March 3, 2026** (the day of the 2026 primary). The county boards will then verify the signatures.
- Deadline for the county boards to verify signatures: **April 6, 2026** (15 business days after canvass of the primary).

**D. District Court and Superior Court Judges.**

- Where to submit the petition request form: the State Board of Elections. Petitioners for district and superior court judge are filed with the State Board regardless of whether the district lies entirely in one county or in more than one county.
- Number of signatures needed: 2% of the total number of registered voters in the district as reflected by the State Board’s voter registration records as of January 1 of the general election year.<sup>8</sup>
- Deadline for petitioner to file signature pages with the State Board: 12:00 noon on **March 3, 2026** (the day of the 2026 primary). Petition signature pages must be separated by the county in which the signatures were obtained and designated accordingly. The county boards will then verify the signatures.
- Deadline for the county boards to verify signatures: **April 6, 2026** (15 business days after canvass of the primary).

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<sup>6</sup> This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2026. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2025 data and should expect changes to the number in January 2026.

<sup>7</sup> This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2026. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2025 data and should expect changes to the number in January 2026.

<sup>8</sup> This data will be updated when it becomes available for 2026. Petitioners initiating their petitions prior to that date will be provided an estimate based on the 2025 data and should expect changes to the number in January 2026.

#### **E. Partisan municipal office.<sup>9</sup>**

- Where to submit the petition request form: the county board of elections.
- Number of signatures needed when the district is the entire municipality: 1.5% of the total number of voters qualified to vote in the municipal election as of January 1 of the election year. Because this number varies by municipality and district, petitioners should contact the county board of elections to determine the number of required signatures.
- Number of signatures needed if the district is less than the entire municipality and only the voters in that district vote for that office: 1.5% of the total number of voters qualified to vote for that office as of January 1 of the election year.
- Deadline for petitioner to file signature pages with the county board: 12:00 noon on **September 19, 2025** (the Friday before the seventh Saturday before the general election). The county boards will then verify the signatures.
- Deadline for the county boards to verify signatures: **September 30, 2025** (15 business days after canvass of the primary).
- A person whose name appeared on the ballot in the municipal partisan primary election is not eligible to have their name placed on the regular municipal election ballot as an unaffiliated candidate for the same office in that year.

\* *North Carolina municipalities have different election types.* Interested persons should contact the [county board of elections](#) that has jurisdiction over the municipal contest in question to determine if it is a partisan election.

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

Yes.<sup>10</sup> For most offices, the filing fee is 1% of the annual salary of the elected office, and municipal offices have a minimum filing fee of \$5.00.<sup>11</sup>

#### **3) What is the date of the General Election?**

The Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In 2025, Election Day for municipal contests is **November 4, 2025**. In 2026, Election Day is **November 3, 2026**.

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

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

<sup>11</sup> 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\(a\)](#).

**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?<sup>12</sup>**

**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.

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.<sup>13</sup> 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

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<sup>12</sup> Threshold of \$1,000 for financial reports for certain candidates: § 163-278.10A.

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](mailto:campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov).

**6) Disclosure of economic interest is also required of *nonfederal* candidates<sup>13</sup>**

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 no 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.

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<sup>13</sup> Statement of Economic Interest: § [138A-22\(d\)](#).