ELECTIONS STEPS FOR CANDIDATES

Election Steps for Candidates

From the Skamania County Auditor's Office

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 (509) 427-3730 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 Skamania County Auditor's Office, 240 NW Vancouver Ave. Rm. #27, Stevenson, during candidate filing week. This filing must include the filing fee, if one is required.

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 wishes to be elected. For Prosecuting Attorney and judicial offices, a candidate must be an attorney. City council positions require you to be registered in the district for one year.

Q: When do I file as a candidate?

A: The "in person" filing period begins on **May 11, 2020** and continues through **May 15, 2020**. In addition, filings will be accepted by mail from **April 27, 2020** to **May 15, 2020.**

Q: How do I file by mail?

A: Obtain a filing form by calling the Skamania County Auditor's Office at (509) 427-3730 or go to www.skamaniacounty.org/elections. 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 and make checks payable to: *Skamania County Auditor*. If mailing through the US Postal Service, mail to: Skamania County Elections, PO Box 790, Stevenson, WA 98648-0790.

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, the County Elections Office must receive a filing 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 (509) 427-3730 to make sure it was received.

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

A: Anyone may file 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 your signature is notarized and 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 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. No filings may be made except during those hours. The doors of the Elections Office will be unlocked at 7:30 a.m. and promptly locked at 5:30 p.m. 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.** There will be lists available which will give the positions subject to the election, as given to us by the jurisdictions. 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.

Q: **What is the fee to file for office?**

A: The fee is 1% of the annual salary. If there is an annual salary of less than $1,000 the filing fee is $10.00. If you are uncertain, please call the district involved or the Elections Department at (509) 427-3730.

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 declares an inability to pay the fee, the candidate may file a *Filing Fee Petition* containing at least one signature per dollar of the filing fee. If the signatures are 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 the Stevenson City Council only voters registered in the City of Stevenson 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. In accordance with WAC 434-215-025 Filing Fee petitions, section (4) "A candidate submitting a filling fee petition must submit all signatures when filing the declaration of candidacy. The candidate cannot supplement the signatures at a later date."

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 filed?

A: Come in to the Elections Department on or 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. The filing fee 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 the Monday following the end of the filing period by filing a "Withdrawal of Candidacy" form with the Auditor's Office Elections Division, 240 NW Vancouver Ave Rm. #27, Stevenson. **The filing fee is not refundable.** If a candidate decides to withdraw after the deadline, it is too late to have their name removed from the ballot administratively. The candidate would have to petition the Superior Court for removal of a name. If you are too late to make an official withdrawal, you should still inform your opponents and the PDC and do a press release to inform the media that you are no longer seeking the office.

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

A: If no one has filed for a nonpartisan office by the end of the regular filing period, a *special filing period* will be opened. This special 3-day filing period for voids and vacancies will normally occur during the first three business days, the week after the Primary. Only those non-partisan 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.

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 that you plan to spend. For jurisdictions with fewer than 1,000 registered voters as of last year's general election, there are no PDC filing requirements. For jurisdictions with more than 1,000 and less than 5,000 registered voters, only the Personal Financial Affairs Statement (PDC Form F-1) will be necessary. For jurisdictions of more than 5,000 registered voters, the Registration: Candidate / Candidate Committee (C-1) form and the (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 website listed below or from the Auditor's Office Elections Division at 240 NW Vancouver Ave Rm. #27, Stevenson. There is no charge to file the completed documents. If you need help in filling out the PDC forms, we suggest you call the PDC to receive specialized assistance. 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.

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

A: It is expected that there will be a local voters' pamphlet published for general election this year. There will be an online voters' guide available on the auditor's website for the primary election.

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 all county jurisdictions in March 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 only the general election pamphlet.

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 map of voting precincts.
- Lists of registered voters by districts or precincts.
- Mailing labels by household.
- Results of past elections.

An estimate of fees will be provided upon request.

Information or services that are provided free include:

- Registration materials.
- Election Guidelines Booklet
- 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/