

Qualifying Petitions

A Candidate's Guide

We have a number of people ask what they need to do to become a candidate. This summary is meant to serve as a brief guide for potential candidates.

To be placed on the ballot, you have to pick up a petition at the Lincoln County Election Commission office located at 208 Davidson Street East, Room 106, Fayetteville, Tn. You must get 25 registered voters from the jurisdiction you are running in to sign the petition. The commission can only count registered voters who list the address we have on file. The petitions must be returned to the Election Commission office by the qualifying deadline. The candidate does not have to return it personally. It is acceptable to mail it or have someone else drop it off. The Election Commission does need the original petition so faxes or emails will not be accepted.

Candidates will receive a packet from the Lincoln County Election Commission when picking up a petition of all paperwork and information for the election.

Before a candidate raises or spends any money, the candidate needs to file an "Appointment of Political Treasurer" with the Election Commission. This form is available at our office or at <https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/tref/attachments/ss-1120.pdf>. You can print it out online and bring it to us. We must have the original, so a fax or email will not work. You may file the Appointment of Political Treasurer at any time, but it must be filed before you raise or spend any money. The Registry of Election Finance has said that "incidental" expenses while you are thinking about running do not count.

You must file an Appointment of Treasurer for each election cycle. If you are running for reelection, or if you ran last time, a new Appointment of Treasurer must be filed. You can transfer the money over but you have to file a new form for each election.

For offices other than Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer, a person may be exempt from filing a Campaign Financial Disclosure. The office for which a person seeks MUST be part-time, compensation less than \$1,000 AND must have spent less than \$1,000 on the campaign.

Keep in mind one important change in the Campaign Finance Laws. It is now against the law to make donations in cash that in the aggregate exceed fifty dollars (\$50). (T.C.A. §2-10-311). The contribution limits in section 2-10-302 still apply. For local candidates, the maximum aggregate contribution is one thousand, five-hundred dollars (\$1,500).

The State Registry of Election Finance (615-741-7959) or <https://www.tn.gov/tref/> has jurisdiction over election finance issues. The Lincoln County Election Commission merely files the reports and makes them available to the public. The state office can answer any question you have about financial reports or requirements.

Finally, within 30 days after the qualifying deadline, a candidate must file a Conflict of Interest Statement with the Tennessee Ethics Commission in Nashville (<https://www.tn.gov/tref/>). You can contact them at 615-741-7959.

Once a candidate files an Appointment of Treasurer, the candidate is required to file periodic disclosure reports. The reports are to be filed quarterly during the election year and semiannually in either the year(s) before or after. Additionally, a report is due 10 days before any election. Our office will notify you by mail of any forms due under this statute.

Please contact us with any questions you may have.

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