



★ VIRGINIA ★
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

Candidate Bulletin

How to Run for a Vacated Local Office

Ballot Access Requirements for the
August 4, 2026, Local Office Primary Elections
and
November 3, 2026, Local Office Special Elections

Definitions

COMET – Electronic campaign finance filing system offered by the Virginia Department of Elections.

Incumbent – An officeholder seeking reelection to the same office.

Independent – An individual who is seeking to run in a General Election without running as a Republican or Democrat (may include a recognized party or no party).

Non-primary party candidate – An individual who is seeking the nomination of a political party by a means other than a primary.

Political party – An organization that, at either of the two preceding statewide general elections, received at least 10 percent of the total vote cast for any statewide office filled in that election.

Primary candidate – An individual who is seeking the nomination of a political party by running in a primary.

Qualified voter – A person who is entitled to vote under the Virginia Constitution and is properly registered to vote (see [definition here](#)).


Recognized political party – An organization that meets the requirements set out in Va. Code § [24.2-612](#).


Va. Code – Virginia Code


VAC – Virginia Administrative Code


ELECT – The Virginia Department of Elections
1100 Bank Street, 1st Floor
Richmond, VA 23219
EA@Elections.Virginia.gov

Key Icons

 - Indicates where to find information in the Code of Virginia or Virginia Administrative Code.

 - Indicates beginning and/or ending deadlines for filing documents.

 - Indicates where to file documents.

 - Indicates additional information that may be helpful.

How candidates get on the ballot in VA

Follow these instructions if you are running for a local vacated office.

The list of special elections occurring during the November 3, 2026, General Election can be found on ELECT's [website](#). The list is updated whenever a new special election is called.

If a vacancy occurs within 90 days of a November general election, the special election for the office will occur at the second November general election after the vacancy, unless a different date has been ordered for the special election. (Va. Code § [24.2-226](#))

Follow these instructions to get on the ballot for:

- The Primary Election on Tuesday, August 4, 2026.
- The General Election on Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

2026 Election Calendar

Type of Election	Candidates: Last Day to File
Primary	
Tuesday, August 4, 2026	Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 pm
	Find in Code: Va. Code §§ 24.2-503 , 24.2-522 and 24.2-524
General	
Tuesday, November 3, 2026	1st November after vacancy: Friday, August 14, 2026, 5:00 pm
	2nd November after vacancy: Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 7:00 pm
	Find in Code: Va. Code §§ 24.2-503 and 24.2-507

Do you fulfill the basic qualifications to be a candidate? (Va. Code § [24.2-500](#))

- You will have been a resident of Virginia for one year immediately preceding the election.
- You will be qualified to vote for and hold the office sought at the time of the election

What, when, and where do I file?

[This table is a summary. Find more information below.](#)

	What do I need to file?	Notes or other information	Where do I file this form?	When does filing open?	What is the deadline to file?
1	Certificate of Candidate Qualification (Local Offices) ELECT-501(4) Va. Code §§ 24.2-501 24.2-503	Deemed to be filed by the deadline if mailed to the general registrar on or before the deadline, postage prepaid by registered or certified mail. Receipt must show date mailed.	The general registrar of your locality of residence.	Primary candidates: When the election is ordered, but not before Friday, January 2, 2026. Non-primary party and independent candidates: When the election is ordered, but not before Friday, January 2, 2026.	Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 pm 1st November after vacancy: Friday, August 14, 2026, 5:00 pm 2nd November after vacancy: Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 7:00 pm
2	Statement of Economic Interest (SOEI) - State and Local Va. Code §§ 24.2-502 24.2-503	Deemed to be filed by the deadline if mailed to the general registrar on or before the deadline, postage prepaid by registered or certified mail. Receipt must show date mailed.	The general registrar of your locality of residence. <i>See below for exceptions to the filing requirement.</i>	Primary candidates: When the election is ordered, but not before Friday, January 2, 2026. Non-primary party and independent candidates: When the election is ordered, but not before Friday, January 2, 2026.	Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 pm 1st November after vacancy: Friday, August 14, 2026, 5:00 pm 2nd November after vacancy: Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 7:00 pm
3a	Primary Filing Fee Va. Code §§ 24.2-523 24.2-524	Primary candidates: Fees outlined below.	Primary candidates: Treasurer or Director of Finance of your locality of residence.	Primary candidates: When the election is ordered, but not before Friday, January 2, 2026. <i>Non-primary party and independent candidates are not required to file.</i>	Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 pm
3b	Primary Filing Fee Receipt Va. Code §§ 24.2-522 24.2-523 24.2-524	Primary candidates: Must be filed with your Declaration of Candidacy (4) and Petitions of Qualified Voters (5).	Primary candidates: The political party chair of your locality of residence.	Primary candidates: Monday, March 16, 2026, Noon (12:00 pm) <i>Non-primary party and independent candidates are not required to file.</i>	Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 pm

	What do I need to file?	Notes or other information	Where do I file this form?	When does filing open?	What is the deadline to file?
4	<p>Declaration of Candidacy SBE-505/520</p> <p>Va. Code §§ 24.2-505 24.2-507 24.2-520 24.2-522</p>	<p>Must be filed with your Petitions of Qualified Voters (5) and, if applicable, primary filing fee receipt (3b).</p>	<p>Primary candidates: The political party chair of your locality of residence.</p> <p>Independent candidates: The general registrar of your locality of residence.</p>	<p>Primary candidates: Monday, March 16, 2026, Noon (12:00 pm)</p> <p><i>Non-primary party candidates are not required to file.</i></p> <p>Independent candidates: When the election is ordered, but not before Friday, January 2, 2026.</p>	<p>Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 pm</p> <p>1st November after vacancy: Friday, August 14, 2026, 5:00 pm</p> <p>2nd November after vacancy: Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 7:00 pm</p>
5	<p>Petitions of Qualified Voters ELECT-506/521</p> <p>Va. Code §§ 24.2-506 24.2-507 24.2-521 24.2-522.</p> <p>Va. Admin Code 1 VAC 20-50-20 1 VAC 20-50-30</p>	<p>Candidates may begin collecting signatures on January 1, 2026. Petition pages are not required to be filed all at the same time; you may file pages throughout the filing window. However, the first petition page filed must be filed with your Declaration of Candidacy (4) and, if applicable, primary filing fee receipt (3b).</p>	<p>Primary candidates: The political party chair of your locality of residence.</p> <p>Independent candidates: The general registrar of your locality of residence.</p>	<p>Primary candidates: Monday, March 16, 2026, Noon (12:00 pm)</p> <p><i>Non-primary party candidates are not required to file.</i></p> <p>Independent candidates: When the election is ordered, but not before Friday, January 2, 2026.</p>	<p>Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 pm</p> <p>1st November after vacancy: Friday, August 14, 2026, 5:00 pm</p> <p>2nd November after vacancy: Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 7:00 pm</p>
6	<p>Statement of Organization</p> <p>Va. Code §§ 24.2 Chapter 9.3 24.2-947.1</p>	<p>Not required for ballot access.</p>	<p>Electronically in COMET, then print two copies, sign them, and submit to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Virginia Department of Elections 2. The general registrar of your locality of residence 	<p>Within 10 days of meeting specific conditions. See conditions listed below and in Va. Code § 24.2-947.1.</p>	
7	<p>Campaign Finance Reports</p> <p>§§ 24.2 Chapter 9.3</p>	<p>Not required for ballot access.</p>	<p>Electronically in COMET</p>	<p>According to the schedule published by the Virginia Department of Elections.</p>	

Follow these steps to file your candidacy:

1. Fill out and submit a [Certificate of Candidate Qualification – Local Offices \(ELECT-501\(4\)\)](#).



Reference:

- Virginia Code §§ [24.2-501](#) and [24.2-503](#).
- State Board of Elections [Policy 2019-001](#)



Primary candidates:

File starting **January 2, 2026**.

File ending **April 2, 2026, at 5 pm**.

Non-primary party and independent candidates:

File starting **When the election is ordered, but not before January 2, 2026**.

File ending

- 1st November after vacancy: **August 14, 2026, at 5 pm**.
- 2nd November after vacancy: **June 16, 2026, at 7 pm**.

This form is deemed to be filed by the deadline if mailed to the [general registrar](#) on or before the deadline, postage prepaid by registered or certified mail. Receipt must show date mailed. The [general registrar](#) may request a scanned copy of the receipt.



Mail or deliver this form to the [general registrar](#) of your locality of residence.



The contact information provided on this form will be included in the candidate list on ELECT's [website](#).

2. Fill out and submit a [Statement of Economic Interests \(SOEI\) - State and Local](#).



Reference:

- Virginia Code §§ [24.2-502](#) and [24.2-503](#).
- State Board of Elections [Policy 2019-001](#)



Primary candidates:

File starting **January 2, 2026**.

File ending **April 2, 2026, at 5 pm**.

Non-primary party and independent candidates:

File starting **When the election is ordered, but not before January 2, 2026**.

File ending

- 1st November after vacancy: **August 14, 2026, at 5 pm**.
- 2nd November after vacancy: **June 16, 2026, at 7 pm**.

This form is deemed to be filed by the deadline if mailed to the [general registrar](#) on or before the deadline, postage prepaid by registered or certified mail. Receipt must show date mailed. The [general registrar](#) may request a scanned copy of the receipt.



Mail or deliver this form to the [general registrar](#) of your locality of residence.



Candidates for member of the governing body or elected school board of any county, city, or town with a population of 3,500 persons or less are not required to file an SOEI as part of ballot access.

Contact the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council for help with completing your SOEI form.

- Website: <https://ethics.dls.virginia.gov/index.asp>
- Email: ethics@dls.virginia.gov
- Phone Number: 804-698-1848

3 a, b Submit the primary filing fee and receipt.

*Non-primary party and independent candidates **are not required to file.***



Reference:

- Virginia Code §§ [24.2-522](#), [24.2-523](#) and [24.2-524](#).
- State Board of Elections [Policy 2019-001](#)



Filing fee:

File starting **January 2, 2026**.

File ending **April 2, 2026, at 5 pm**.

Filing fee receipt:

File starting **March 16, 2026, at noon (12 pm)**.

File ending **April 2, 2026, at 5 pm**.

The primary filing fee receipt **must be filed with** your Declaration of Candidacy (4) and Petitions of Qualified Voters (5).

The receipt must be **received** by the applicable deadline listed above. A postmark or other mailing service timestamp does not qualify.



Filing fee: Mail or deliver to the Treasurer or Director of Finance of your locality of residence.

Filing fee receipt: Mail or deliver to the political party chair of your locality of residence.



The primary filing fee equals 2% of one year's minimum salary attached to the office in effect in the year in which you file. Contact your local Treasurer or Director of Finance for the primary filing fee amount.

What happens to my primary filing fee if I am disqualified, unopposed, or withdraw?

- **If you are disqualified or unopposed** your filing fee will be refunded.
- **If you withdraw:**
 - **BEFORE** the party chair files the Party Certification of Primary Candidates form with ELECT and the [general registrar](#) your filing fee will be refunded.
 - **AFTER** the party chair files the Party Certification of Primary Candidates form with ELECT and the [general registrar](#) your filing fee will **NOT** be refunded.
 - The window for party chairs to file is April 2, 2026, 5:01 pm, through April 7, 2026.

4 Fill out and submit a [Declaration of Candidacy \(SBE-505/520\)](#).

Non-primary party candidates are not required to file.



Reference:

- Virginia Code §§ [24.2-505](#), [24.2-507](#), [24.2-520](#), and [24.2-522](#).
- State Board of Elections [Policy 2019-001](#)



Primary candidates:

File starting **March 16, 2026, at noon (12:00 pm)**.

File ending **April 2, 2026, at 5 pm**.

Independent candidates:

File starting **When the election is ordered, but not before January 2, 2026**.

File ending

- 1st November after vacancy: **August 14, 2026, at 5 pm**.
- 2nd November after vacancy: **June 16, 2026, at 7 pm**.

The Declaration of Candidacy **must be filed with** your primary filing fee receipt (3b) if applicable, and the first Petition of Qualified Voters (5) page filed.

The form must be **received** by the applicable deadline listed above. A postmark or other mailing service timestamp does not qualify.



Primary candidates: Mail or deliver this form to the political party chair of your locality of residence.

Independent candidates: Mail or deliver this form to the [general registrar](#) of your locality of residence.



Effective July 1, 2024 ([HB90/SB109](#)) the declaration of candidacy was revised to include a statement that if the signer's name appears on the primary ballot and they are not nominated then their name is not to be printed on the ballots for that office in the succeeding general election.

5 Collect petition signatures and submit [Petitions of Qualified Voters \(SBE-506/521\)](#).



Non-primary party candidates are not required to file.




Reference:

- Virginia Code §§ [24.2-506](#), [24.2-507](#), [24.2-521](#), and [24.2-522](#).
- Virginia Administrative Code [1 VAC 20-50-20](#) and [1 VAC 20-50-30](#).
- State Board of Elections [Policy 2019-001](#)
- Local charters for additional or different requirements. Contact the local attorney for guidance.

Continued on next page.

	Primary Candidates	Independent Candidates 1st November after vacancy	Independent Candidates 2nd November after vacancy
	Collect signatures: January 1, 2026, through April 2, 2026.	Collect signatures: When the election is ordered, but not before January 1, 2026, through August 14, 2026.	Collect signatures: When the election is ordered, but not before January 1, 2026, through June 16, 2026.
	Submit pages: March 16, 2026, at noon (12 pm) through April 2, 2026, at 5 pm.	Submit pages: When the election is ordered, but not before January 2, 2026, through August 14, 2026, 5 pm.	Submit pages: When the election is ordered, but not before January 2, 2026, through June 16, 2026, 7 pm.
	Mail or deliver the petition pages to: The political party chair of your locality of residence.	Mail or deliver the petition pages to: The general registrar of your locality of residence.	Mail or deliver the petition pages to: The general registrar of your locality of residence.

	For a candidate for:	Number of petition signatures you need from qualified voters
	• A constitutional office	125 signatures
	• Membership on the governing body or elected school board...	
	○ of any county or city	125 signatures
	▪ or if from an election district not at large containing 1,000 or fewer registered voters	50 signatures
	○ of any town that has more than 3,500 registered voters	125 signatures
	▪ or if from a ward or other district not at large	25 signatures
	○ of any town that has at least 1,500 but not more than 3,500 registered voters	50 signatures
	▪ or if from a ward or other district not at large	25 signatures
	○ of any town that has fewer than 1,500 registered voters	Petition signatures are not required.
	• Director of a soil and water conservation district	25 signatures
	• For any other candidate	50 signatures

Petition pages are not required to be filed all at the same time; you may file pages throughout the filing window. However, **the first petition page filed must be filed with your Declaration of Candidacy (4) and, if applicable, primary filing fee receipt (3b).**

The pages must be **received** by the applicable deadline listed above. A postmark or other mailing service timestamp does not qualify.

Independent candidates:

May request notification of any problems that can be corrected before the filing deadline. Make this request by email to the [general registrar](#) of your locality of residence. The general registrar will provide the requested information when able but cannot guarantee a timely response as it will be dependent on the processing of the petition pages.

If notified by the general registrar that the required number of qualified voter signatures was not submitted, an appeal can be submitted to the local Electoral Board. The appeal must be submitted

within 5 days of the disqualification notice being issued. **You will need to prove that you have the correct number of signatures from qualified voters before the deadline.** Find more information in [1 VAC 20-50-30](#).

Things to remember about petitions:

Petition Pages must...

- Be on the Virginia Department of Elections [form](#). The form cannot be altered in any way.
- Be printed on one piece of paper, front and back. If the back is on a second piece of paper, the entire page (front and back) will be rendered invalid.
- Contain the signature, printed full name, and full registered residence address of each qualified voter and the date the voter signed. The last four (4) digits of the qualified voter's Social Security Number (SSN) would help in confirming the voter but is not required.

The petition circulator...

- Must be a legal resident of the United States.
- Cannot be a minor.
- Can be an individual who was convicted of a felony only if their voting rights are restored.
- Cannot be the circulator of the page on which they signed as a voter.
- Must sign the affidavit on each page they circulated in front of a notary.

When collecting your petition signatures, it is helpful to remember that...

- Because not all the people who sign petitions are qualified voters, ELECT recommends collecting at least 1 1/2 times the number of signatures required.
- Giving clear instructions on how a voter should fill out the page (provide all information in legible handwriting) will better the chances of a signature being accepted.
- [1VAC20-50-20](#) lists material omissions for petition signatures and pages. If your petition has a material omission, it may render the page or signature invalid.

The next two requirements relate to Campaign Finance accounts and reporting. While these are not ballot access requirements, non-compliance will result in penalties and the inability to qualify for, perform the duties of, or receive a salary or emoluments from the office. Candidates who have run for an office in previous years should contact ELECT's Campaign Finance Team (CampaignFinance@Elections.Virginia.gov) or their local [general registrar](#) to ensure full compliance.

6. Fill out and submit a [Statement of Organization for a Candidate \(SOO\)](#).



Reference:

- Virginia Code Title 24.2 [Chapter 9.3](#).
- Campaign Finance [Laws and Policies](#)



File within 10 days of performing one of the following:

- Accept a contribution.
- Spend any funds.
- Pay a filing fee.
- File a Certificate of Candidate Qualification.
- Appoint a campaign treasurer, campaign committee, or campaign depository.



Complete electronically in [COMET](#) , print two copies, sign both, then mail or deliver according to the instructions in [COMET](#) to:

- The Virginia Department of Elections.
- The [general registrar](#) of your locality of residence.



Campaign finance filing requirements are not a requirement of ballot access.

If you do not comply with all campaign finance requirements:

- You will have to pay penalties.
- You will not be permitted to qualify for any office, enter upon the duties thereof, or receive any salary or emoluments therefrom.

7. Submit Campaign Finance Reports.



Reference:

- Virginia Code Title 24.2 [Chapter 9.3](#).
- Campaign Finance [Laws and Policies](#)



Submit reports according to the [schedule](#) published by the Virginia Department of Elections.



Complete electronically in [COMET](#).

How do I withdraw my candidacy?



Reference: Virginia Code § [24.2-612.2](#).



A withdrawing candidate should submit their withdrawal notice with enough time before absentee voting commences to ensure their name is removed from the ballot.



Mail, deliver, or email to your local [general registrar](#)'s office. The general registrar will notify other affected general registrars and/or the Virginia Department of Elections, as appropriate.



To be withdrawn from the ballot you must submit a signed and notarized notice of withdrawal declaring your intent to withdraw from the election. Use the Virginia Department of Elections' [Candidate Withdrawal Form](#) (ELECT-612.2).

If a candidate submits a notarized withdrawal notice to the general registrar between 44 days and 7 days before a primary election, and the result is only one remaining candidate that would then be unopposed, the remaining candidate will be declared the party's nominee for the office sought and the primary election will be cancelled.

Continue to third-party recognition on next page.

Qualified Independent Candidate that Wishes to be Recognized as a Third-Party Candidate

The following two letters must be filed:

1. A letter signed by the State Chair stating the following:
 - The group has been in existence for at least six months prior to the filing of its nominee.
 - The group has a state central committee composed of registered voters from each of Virginia's 11 congressional districts in continual existence for the six months prior to the filing of its nominee.
 - The group has a party plan and bylaws.
2. A letter signed by the State Chair and signed by the candidate stating the following:
 - The Chair certifies the candidate is the nominee of the party.
 - The candidate accepts the nomination of the party.



Reference: Virginia Code § [24.2-613](#).



File starting **January 2, 2026**.

File ending **June 22, 2026**.



Submit the two letters to the Virginia Department of Elections:

- Email: ea@elections.virginia.gov.
- Mail or deliver: Virginia Department of Elections
1100 Bank Street, 1st Floor
Richmond, VA 23219



The Virginia Department of Elections recommends that the independent candidate provide this information to the State Chair of their party. This presumably will ensure that the party will provide the nominee with what they need to file with the Virginia Department of Elections by the appropriate deadline.

Virginia Code § [24.2-613](#) allows for political party identification on the ballot for federal, statewide, and General Assembly offices only.

Local office candidates may seek party recognition for the purpose of ballot order, but the party identification will not be on the ballot.

General Disclaimer

The electronic version of this Candidate Bulletin can be found on the Department of Elections website:

<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/candidate-bulletins/index.html>

Candidates are responsible for complying with all current applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

This Candidate Bulletin provides an overview of Virginia electoral requirements only. It does not purport to provide legal advice or binding statements of official policy. Rather, the Candidate Bulletin describes election law found in the Code of Virginia. Applicable laws and regulations are subject to change in content and interpretation.