



# HENRY COUNTY TENNESSEE

Election Commission

*"a world by the water"*

## **Voting 101** Candidates Informational Packet *2026 ed.*



# INTRO

Running for public office is an important decision that requires preparation, research, and a clear understanding of the responsibilities involved. Before beginning the process, potential candidates should take time to learn about the office they are interested in, including the duties, qualifications, and expectations associated with the position.

If you are picking up a petition as a potential candidate, you must know which office you intend to seek. Election Commission staff cannot provide information regarding job descriptions, salaries, campaign strategy, or whether a person should run for office.

Potential candidates may also have questions about when or how to declare or announce their candidacy. These decisions are considered political strategy and must be made by each individual candidate.

Choosing to run for office is a major decision. However, the responsibility of serving if elected is even greater. Candidates are encouraged to carefully consider the commitment required before beginning the process.

Any registered voter who is interested in running for office should visit the appropriate Election Commission office to begin the petition process. The individual will be asked to complete a request form that includes basic information such as name, address, contact number, and the office for which they are requesting a petition.

Once the request form is completed, a petition packet will be prepared based on the election, office, and political party, if applicable.

Federal and State elections are mandated by the government. Local elections are not mandated in the same way, with the exception of the August General Election.

March Local Primary and May Local Primary elections are held only by the call of the Democratic and/or Republican parties.

# THE PETITION

A potential candidate will receive a petition packet that includes the forms and information needed to begin the qualifying process. This packet may include the following items:

- Petition
- The official form used to collect nominating signatures.
- Helpful Tips on Getting Signatures Information Sheet
- Guidance to help candidates properly collect valid signatures.
- Important Dates Spreadsheet
- A list of key election dates, including the qualifying deadline, voter registration deadline, early voting dates, and other important dates.
- Disclaimer Law Information Sheet
- Information regarding required campaign disclaimers, including “Paid for by” disclaimer requirements.
- Statement of Interests Form  
A required form that must be filed by all candidates.
- Campaign Finance Forms  
Forms and information related to campaign finance reporting requirements.

## **Obtaining and Returning a Petition**

All petitions for local office must be obtained from the Henry County Election Commission. Petitions for statewide or federal office must be obtained from the Tennessee Division of Elections in Nashville.

Each petition will include the candidate’s name and the office sought at the time it is issued by the election office.

An individual may pick up a petition on behalf of a candidate. An individual may also return the petition for the candidate. However, only the candidate may complete the candidate's section and sign the candidate's signature on each page. No titles may be printed with the candidate's name.

Each petition issued is considered a public record. Petition information may be released to the public and media on a regular basis.

Photocopies of petitions will not be accepted as replacements for the original petition. If the original petition is lost, the candidate must begin again by obtaining another original petition from the appropriate election office.

### **Petition Signature Requirements**

A candidate's qualifying petition must contain at least 25 nominating signatures in addition to the candidate's own signature. This requirement does not apply to Presidential petitions.

Nominating signatures must be from individuals who are eligible to vote for the candidate.

Candidates are encouraged to collect at least 30 signatures because some individuals may not be registered voters, may have become ineligible to vote, or may not have updated their address with the election office.

Voters signing a petition should sign their name as it appears on their voter registration record. Each voter must sign their own name. A husband may not sign for a wife, and a wife may not sign for a husband.

Anyone who cannot sign their own name must have two witnesses complete their names and addresses.

Voters should list their complete and correct residential address, including the city. Post office boxes will not be accepted as a residential address.

### **Filing the Petition**

A postmark does not satisfy the filing deadline. The petition must be received by the election office before the deadline. Election office staff will provide a receipt of the filed petition for the candidate's records.

Any petition filed after the deadline will prevent the candidate's name from being placed on the ballot.

All candidates are encouraged to return their nominating petitions before the final day of the qualifying period to avoid missing the noon deadline. Nominating petitions will be checked in the order in which they are received.

Candidates seeking election in multiple county districts must file certified duplicate copies in all counties that make up the legislative or judicial district no later than noon on the last day to qualify.

There is no charge for filing a nominating petition.

# Qualifications

Tennessee State Law establishes the general qualifications that all candidates must meet in order to appear on the ballot. Some elected offices may also have additional requirements beyond the general qualifications listed below.

## **General Qualifications for Elected Office**

Under TCA § 8-18-101, candidates for elected office must generally meet the following requirements:

- Be eighteen 18 years of age or older
- Be a citizen of the United States
- Be a resident of the State of Tennessee
- Have been an inhabitant of the state, county, district, or circuit for the period of time required by the Tennessee Constitution and state law
- Offices with Additional Qualifications

Some offices have additional qualifications that must be met before a candidate can qualify for the ballot. Candidates are responsible for reviewing the requirements for the specific office they are seeking.

Additional qualification requirements may apply to offices including, but not limited to:

- U.S. President
- U.S. Senator
- U.S. House of Representatives
- Governor
- County Mayor
- County Sheriff
- County Road Superintendent

For more information about qualifications for elected offices, visit the Tennessee Secretary of State website:

<https://sos.tn.gov/products/elections/qualifications-elected-offices>

## **Exceptions Under TCA 8-18-101**

Certain individuals may be prohibited from holding office under Tennessee law. Exceptions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Individuals who have been convicted of offering or giving a bribe, larceny, or any other offense declared infamous by law, unless their citizenship rights have been restored as provided by law.
- Individuals who have an unpaid judgment against them for money received in an official capacity that is owed to the United States, the State of Tennessee, or any county.
- Individuals who are defaulters to the treasury at the time of the election. The election of any such person shall be void.
- Soldiers, seamen, marines, or airmen serving in the regular Army, Navy, or Air Force of the United States.
- Members of Congress and individuals holding any office of profit or trust under a foreign power, another state, or the United States.

### **Qualification Process**

Submitting a nominating petition with the required number of valid signatures is only one part of the qualification process. A candidate is not automatically qualified for the ballot simply by turning in a petition with 25 valid signatures.

After a petition is submitted, the Election Commission will notify the individual in writing whether the petition contains the required number of valid signatures. In many cases, individuals choose to wait at the Election Commission office to receive their receipt of petition acceptance.

The Election Commission Members will hold a called meeting to review all potential candidates. The members of the commission have the legal responsibility to place only the names of candidates who have met all necessary qualifications on the ballot.

The qualification process may include, but is not limited to:

- Review of the nominating petition
- Verification of residency requirements
- Felony conviction inquiries
- Review of office-specific qualifications

**Individuals with a felony conviction must have their rights restored by a court before they can qualify for or hold any office in the State of Tennessee**

**Certain offices such as County Sheriff County Road Superintendent and others may have additional qualification requirements that must be met in addition to the petition process**

# **Campaign Finance**

Candidates for local elected office are required under state law to file financial disclosure documents in a timely manner. Campaign finance materials are included in the petition packet and should be reviewed carefully, as there are several deadlines, requirements, and laws that apply to campaign finance reporting.

The Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance has jurisdiction over election finance matters. The Election Commission's role is to receive campaign finance reports, file them, and make them available to the public.

Failure to file campaign finance documents on time may result in penalties and can also create negative publicity for a candidate.

## **Campaign Financial Disclosure**

In some cases, a candidate may be exempt from filing Campaign Financial Disclosure reports. This exemption may apply to offices other than Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer if all of the following conditions are met:

The office sought is part-time.

The compensation for the office is less than 1,000.

The candidate spends less than 1,000 on the campaign.

Candidates should review the campaign finance information included in their petition packet to determine which forms and deadlines apply to their specific office and campaign.

## **Appointment of Political Treasurer**

An *"Appointment of Political Treasurer Form"* is included in the petition packet.

Under state law, a candidate must file an Appointment of Political Treasurer with the Election Commission before receiving or spending any campaign money. This form begins the campaign finance reporting process.

The Appointment of Political Treasurer Form is also available Online through the Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance website.

The original form must be filed with the Election Commission. Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted.

The treasurer form may be filed at any time. Once filed, the candidate is responsible for completing any required financial disclosure forms according to the applicable deadlines.

A new Appointment of Political Treasurer Form must be filed for each election cycle. Candidates running for re-election, or candidates who ran in a previous election, must file a new form for the current election.

Candidates who are exempt from Campaign Financial Disclosure requirements do not file an Appointment of Political Treasurer Form.

### **Unpaid Civil Penalties**

A person who has unpaid civil penalties imposed by the Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance cannot qualify to seek public office unless the penalty has been paid and the required report has been filed and documented by the Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance.

For each election, the Election Commission receives a list from the Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance identifying individuals in Tennessee who have unpaid civil penalties.

# **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

## **Statement of Interest**

Within 30 days after the qualifying deadline, each candidate must file a Statement of Interest with the Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance.

This form is required for everyone who qualifies as a candidate, regardless of whether the candidate files campaign finance reports or qualifies for an exemption.

Individuals appointed to office, such as those filling a vacancy, are also required by law to file a Statement of Interest within 30 days of their appointment.

Candidates who currently hold an elected position must continue to file this form on an annual basis.

## **Disclaimer Law**

Tennessee's "Paid for by" disclaimer requirements apply to campaign materials used when running for office.

These disclaimer requirements do not apply to bumper stickers, pins, buttons, ink pens, novelties, or similar small items when the disclaimer cannot be conveniently printed on the item.

The disclaimer requirements also do not apply to communications regarding questions on the ballot.

Additional information about disclaimer requirements is included in the petition packet.

The Henry County Election Commission is not responsible for campaign signs, nor does it manage the distribution or placement of signs.

Questions regarding the interpretation or enforcement of T.C.A. § 2-19-120 should be directed to the District Attorney General.

## **Withdrawals**

Candidates may withdraw their names from the official ballot no later than noon on the seventh day after the last day to qualify as a candidate.

Any withdrawal statement must be submitted in writing, signed by the candidate, and filed with the Election Commission office.

After the withdrawal deadline has passed, the names of all remaining qualified candidates will appear on the official ballot, provided all other qualifications and requirements have been completed.

## **Write-In Candidates**

Any person seeking to be elected by write-in ballot must complete and file a notice requesting that their write-in votes be counted. This notice must be filed in each county of the district no later than noon, 50 days before the general election.

The notice must be submitted on a form prescribed by the Coordinator of Elections. The form does not require signatures from anyone other than the write-in candidate requesting that ballots be counted.

The Election Commission files the form; however, the write-in candidate's name will not appear on the ballot. Election Commission staff cannot provide or share information regarding write-in candidates.

A write-in candidate may withdraw the notice by filing a written letter of withdrawal in the same manner as the original notice. The withdrawal must be filed no later than the fifth day before the election.

## **Caucus**

Not all elections are mandated by the State.

In some cases, a caucus may be used as an alternative to a Primary Election. This decision is made by the local political parties.

A caucus is organized and conducted according to the bylaws of the applicable political party.

# **ELECTION CALENDAR INFORMATION**

Election dates, petition availability, qualifying deadlines, and offices on the ballot may vary depending on the type of election, the election year, and any vacancies that may have occurred. Candidates should carefully review the election calendar for the specific office they are seeking.

## **Presidential Preference Primary**

The Presidential Preference Primary is held in March every four years.

Local Primary Elections may also be held, depending on whether they are called by the local political parties.

For most elections, petitions are available 90 days before Election Day, and the qualifying deadline is 60 days before Election Day.

Presidential candidates have state-specific filing requirements and deadlines. Information regarding ballot access laws may be obtained by contacting the Tennessee Secretary of State.

The offices to be elected will depend on the election year and any vacancies that may need to be filled.

## **State Primary and County General Elections**

The State Primary and County General Elections include offices at the federal, state, judicial, county, and local levels.

For the 2020 election cycle, petitions became available on February 3, 2020. The qualifying deadline was April 2, 2020, at noon.

## **Offices to Be Elected in the State Primary**

The following offices were included in the State Primary:

- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Representatives, District 8
- State Senate, District 24
- State House of Representatives, District 75

## **Offices to Be Elected in the Local General Election**

The following offices were included in the Local General Election:

- Chancellor, 24th Judicial District, 5-County District
- Constable, District 4, Unexpired Term
- County School Board, Districts 1, 3, and 5
- Paris Special School District School Board, 4 At-Large Members
- Property Assessor
- Road Board Commission Chairman
- Road Board Commission, Districts 2, 4, Unexpired Term, and 5
- Superintendent of Roads

## **Federal/State General and Municipal Elections**

The Federal/State General and Municipal Elections include federal, state, and municipal offices.

For the 2020 election cycle, municipal petitions became available on June 20, 2020. The municipal qualifying deadline was August 20, 2020, at noon.

## **Offices to Be Elected in the Federal/State General Election**

The following offices were included in the Federal/State General Election:

- President and Vice President
- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Representatives, District 8
- State Senate, District 24
- State House of Representatives, District 75

## **Offices to Be Elected in the Municipal Election**

The following municipal offices were included:

- City of Cottage Grove: Mayor and 4 Aldermen
- City of Henry: Mayor and 2 Aldermen
- City of Paris: 2 At-Large Commission Members
- City of Puryear: Mayor, 2 Aldermen, and City Recorder

# REGARDING REAL ID

BOTH ID'S ARE  
FEDERALLY  
ISSUED but **ONLY**  
THE  
REAL ID IS  
FEDERAL  
IDENTIFICATION



New REAL ID

Regular  
Driver License