

Board of Commissioners

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INTRODUCTION TO RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

General Information and Disclaimers

The Clinton County Voter Registration Office is located on the third floor of the Piper Building, 2 Piper Way, Suite 309, Lock Haven, PA 17745. Our phone number is (570) 893-4019.

Candidates for local offices (county, city, borough, township, school district, and local party offices; magisterial district judgeships; constables) must file paperwork with our office. Candidates for federal offices, statewide offices, state legislative offices, county court judgeships, and state party offices must file paperwork with the PA Department of State.

The information in this document is intended to be introductory in scope; it should not be construed as comprehensive. The information may apply to many candidates in many circumstances, but it will not apply to all candidates in all circumstances. Candidates are strongly advised to contact the Voter Registration Office to discuss the nomination process before attempting to circulate petitions or file nominating documents to run for office.

Candidates must carefully review the instructions on nomination documents, campaign finance reporting documents, and the *Statement of Financial Interests* before completing and filing them.

The Voter Registration Office can answer procedural questions about the nomination process and supply some informational materials, but we cannot provide accounting, tax, or legal advice. Candidates are strongly advised to consult with a licensed, qualified professional in the appropriate field.

Candidates must determine if they are qualified to hold the public office being sought, and if they can afford to commit their time, money, and energy to a campaign.

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How to Gain Access to the Ballot

Citizens affiliated with the Republican Party or Democratic Party who are interested in running for a local office must circulate and file *Nomination Petitions* with our office in order to gain access to the spring primary ballot. *Nomination Petitions* are circulated and filed between the 13th Tuesday and the 10th Tuesday preceding a spring primary. The required number of signatures varies by office and municipality; the Office of Voter Services can provide this number. The Republican and Democratic candidates who receive the most votes from the voters of their respective parties during the spring primary will be nominated to appear together on the November election ballot.

Citizens affiliated with minor political parties and political bodies (commonly known as “third parties”) who are interested in running for a local office must file *Nomination Papers* with our office in order to directly access the November election ballot. *Nomination Papers* are circulated between the 10th Wednesday preceding a spring primary and August 1st. The required number of signatures is a percentage of votes cast for the same office within the same election district in a previous election, which varies from year to year; the Office of Voter Services can provide this number.

All candidates for public office must complete a PA Ethics Commission *Statement of Financial Interests* and file a copy with the Office of Voter Services when filing the nomination paperwork. Instructions for completing and filing the form with the appropriate authorities are included with the form.

Nomination Petitions and *Nomination Papers* are only available in hard copy form at the Office of Voter Services. Candidates should call in advance to confirm that petitions are ready. The *Statement of Financial Interests* is available as hard copy in our office.

Filing nomination documents may entail a filing fee depending on the office and/or municipality. The Office of Voter Services can quote the appropriate filing fee.

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Establishing a Campaign Committee (Optional)

A candidate may authorize a campaign committee to accept contributions and make expenditures on his or her behalf. The campaign committee must have a designated chairperson and treasurer in order to operate. The candidate may serve in one of these roles, but no person may serve in both roles. The *Political Committee Registration Statement* form (to establish a committee) and the *Authorization for a Political Committee to Receive Funds on Behalf of a Candidate* form (to authorize the committee to accept contributions and make expenditures on the candidate's behalf) are available as hard copy in our office.

Campaign Finance Reporting

All candidates for local offices must file regular campaign finance reports with the Office of Voter Services at specific times during the election cycle. Candidates and their campaign committees must keep separate records of all contributions received and expenditures made in support of their run for office. Any contribution or expenditure of money (including debts or loans), gifts, goods, services, or any other thing intended to influence the outcome of an election must be reported. Reporting forms are available as hard copy in our office.

Restrictions on Electioneering

No person, including a candidate, may electioneer or solicit votes when inside a polling place. All persons, except those persons authorized to be inside the polling place (election officers, clerks, machine inspectors, overseers, watchers, persons in the course of voting, persons lawfully giving assistance to voters, and constables), must remain at least ten (10) feet from the polling place during the time the polls are open. Candidates may never enter a polling place except for the express purpose of casting their own vote.

Watchers

A candidate may appoint two watchers for each polling place where the candidate's name appears on the ballot; however, only one watcher per candidate may be present inside a polling place at any one time. Candidates interested in appointing watchers should contact the Office of Voter Services.

Election Results

Unofficial election results are posted to the Clinton County webpage at www.clintoncountypa.com after 8:00pm on Election Night as precincts report in. The Clinton County Board of Elections begins its official computation and canvass of election returns at 9:00am on the third day following an election. The official count is a 7 to 10 day process.