

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION CANDIDATE NEWSLETTER

2023

WHO IS A CANDIDATE?

A candidate is a person who seeks election, nomination for election, or seeks appointment to a local or statewide office. A person on whose behalf write – in votes are solicited for election to a local or statewide office is also considered a candidate.

DATES TO REMEMBER

April 10th – First Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

July 10th – Second Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

October 10th – Third Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

January 10th – Fourth Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

Pre-Election Campaign Disclosures must be filed by all candidates fifteen – twenty days before the election.

File your Statement of Economic Interests before you are sworn in if you are in a non-partisan race. File your Statement of Economic Interests immediately if you are in a partisan race.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES

As a candidate for public office in South Carolina, you are required to do the following:

As a candidate for office, you are subject to the Ethics Reform Act and are now under the jurisdiction of the State Ethics Commission. As you raise money for your campaign, please know that individuals can contribute up to \$1,000.00 for your race if you are running in a local election and \$3,500.00 if you are running in a statewide race.

You must open a campaign checking account if you are spending money on your race – even if you are only spending your own money. Failure to open a campaign checking account is a violation of state law. All campaign contributions (even your own) should go into your campaign checking account and all campaign expenditures should come out of your campaign checking.

Candidates are required to file campaign disclosures – disclosing all campaign contributions and expenditures. An initial campaign disclosure is due when you raise or spend a total of \$500.00. For example, if you raise \$300.00 and spend \$200.00 you should immediately file an Initial Campaign Disclosure. You must file campaign disclosures every quarter as long as you maintain a balance in your campaign checking account. Even if you do not raise or spend money on your election, all candidates must file a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure fifteen – twenty days before their election.

If you are running in a partisan race, you must immediately file a Statement of Economic Interests disclosing sources of income to your household. If you are running in a non-partisan race, you do not need to file a Statement of Economic Interests unless you win your race. If you are successful in your race, you must file a Statement of Economic Interests prior to taking the oath of office.



WHERE TO FILE

Your campaign disclosures and your Statement of Economic Interests must be filed electronically using the Commission's website <https://ethics.sc.gov>. Once you get to the website, click on "Electronic Filing" at the top of the screen.

You will be directed to the Commission's filing portal where you will create a user account that will assist you with filing. If you have any questions along the way, please call us at 803-253-4192 or watch tutorials at <https://ethicsfiling.sc.gov/filing/videos>.

Please opt in to receive text message that will remind you of important filing deadlines.

WHEN THE RACE IS OVER

When your race is over, you must continue to file campaign disclosures as long as you have a balance in your campaign checking account. Once your campaign checking account balance reaches \$0.00, you can file a final campaign disclosure.

In order to bring your campaign checking account balance to \$0.00, you can donate your remaining campaign funds to a 501(c)(3), donate the remaining campaign funds to the state's general fund, return campaign funds to your contributors at a pro-rated rate, or by a combination of all three methods.

IF YOU DO NOT FILE...

Failing to file these required documents can be costly. For every filing that you fail to file, you are looking at a penalty of up to \$5,000.00. These penalties can really add up – if you fail to file campaign disclosures and a Statement of Economic Interests over the course of one year, you can be penalized up to \$25,000.00. Please be aware that these penalties must be paid from your personal funds – not campaign funds.

HELPFUL POINTERS

- 1) Do not use any government resources (office, equipment, time, etc.) in your run for office. You shouldn't be working on your campaign from a government issued computer or while working for the government.
- 2) Do not use your campaign money to pay for any personal expenses. You cannot pay for your meals, clothes, or gasoline using your campaign account. You are allowed to keep a mileage chart for reimbursement.
- 3) Do not withdraw more than \$100.00 in cash from your campaign account. Campaign expenses should be paid using a check or credit/debit card.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

We offer candidate training on a regular basis – and you can attend from the comfort of your couch! If you do not receive an email from us inviting you to one of our virtual trainings, please contact us at candidateinformation@ethics.sc.gov. If you have any questions about the Ethics Act, please give us a call.