NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

A Candidate's Guide to the 2025-26 Statewide Primary and General Elections

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A Candidate's Guide to Elections in North Carolina

This resource has been created to give general guidance and assistance to candidates. This guidance does not absolve a candidate from the responsibility of reading the North Carolina General Statutes and any other state or federal rule, regulation or code related to election administration and campaign finance laws.

If you have any questions concerning this Guide, please contact your county board of elections or the State Board. If your inquiry rises to the level of a request for legal advice to assist you in your campaign, we will encourage you to seek legal counsel.

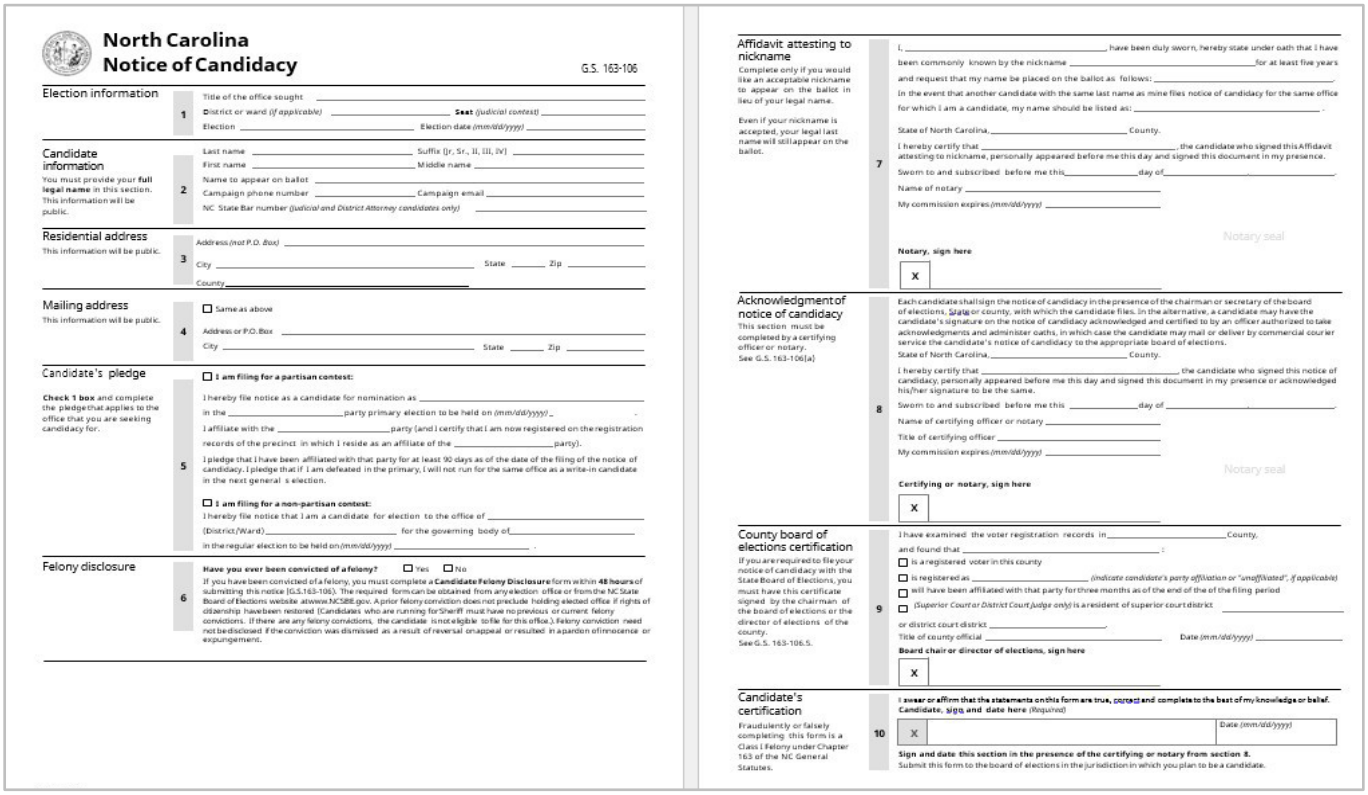
IMPORTANT DATES		
Candidate Filing Period		
	Primary	**Soil & Water**
Candidate Filing Period Begins G.S. § 163-106.2; G.S. § 139-6	12/01/2025 (noon)	06/08/2026 (noon)
Last Day to Withdraw as a Candidate Entitled to a Refund G.S. § 163-106.4	12/16/2025	06/29/2026
Candidate Filing Period Ends G.S. § 163-106.2; G.S. § 139-6	12/19/2025 (noon)	07/02/2026 (noon)
Election Event Schedule		
Event	**Primary Election**	**General Election**
Absentee Voting by Mail Begins G.S. § 163-227.10	01/12/2026	09/04/2026
Voter Registration Deadline G.S. § 163-82.6(d)	02/06/2026	10/09/2026
Voter Challenge Deadline G.S. § 163-85(a)	02/06/2026	10/09/2026
Early Voting Begins G.S. § 163-227.2	02/12/2026	10/15/2026
Last Day to Request a Civilian Absentee Ballot G.S. § 163-230.1(a)	02/17/2026	10/20/2026
Early Voting Ends G.S. § 163-227.2	02/28/2026	10/31/2026
Last Day to Return an Absentee Ballot G.S. § 163-231	03/03/2026 (7:30pm)	11/03/2026 (7:30pm)
Election Day G.S. § 163-1; G.S. § 163-111	03/03/2026	11/03/2026
County Canvass G.S. § 163-182.5	03/13/2026 (11am)	11/13/2026 (11am)
Deadline to File an Election Protest (before 11AM) G.S. § 163-182.9 (re: vote count or tabulation)	03/13/2026	11/13/2026
Deadline to Request a Recount G.S. § 163-182.7(b) (county board jurisdictional contest)	03/16/2026 (5pm)	11/16/2026 (5pm)
Deadline to Request a Recount G.S. § 163-182.7(c) (state board jurisdictional contest)	03/17/2026 (12 noon)	11/17/2026 (12 noon)
Deadline to File an Election Protest G.S. § 163-182.9 (re: other than vote count or tabulation)	03/17/2026 (noon)	11/17/2026 (noon)
State Canvass G.S. § 163-182.5(c)	TBD	11/24/2026 (11 am)

1 CANDIDATE FILING

The date of the general election is **Tuesday, November 3, 2026**. To determine the nominee for certain contests, there is a primary election on **Tuesday, March 3, 2026**. If no candidate wins the first primary under the provisions of G.S. § 163-111, there may be a second primary for that contest on **Tuesday, May 12, 2026.**

1.1 NOTICE OF CANDIDACY

A person seeking to become a candidate must file a notice of candidacy with the appropriate board of elections. The State Board provides a *Notice of Candidacy* form, which is available on its website or from any county board of elections.



North Carolina
Notice of Candidacy
G.S. 163-106

Election information
1 Title of the office sought
District or ward (if applicable) Seat (judicial contest)
Election Election date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Candidate information
You must provide your full legal name in this section. This information will be public.
2 Last name Suffix (Jr, Sr., II, III, IV)
First name Middle name
Name to appear on ballot
Campaign phone number Campaign email
NC State Bar number (judicial and District Attorney candidates only)

Residential address
This information will be public.
3 Address (not P.O. Box)
City State Zip
County

Mailing address
This information will be public.
4 ☐ Same as above
Address or P.O. Box
City State Zip

Candidate's pledge
Check 1 box and complete the pledge that applies to the office that you are seeking candidacy for.
5 ☐ I am filing for a partisan contest:
I hereby file notice as a candidate for nomination as
in the party primary election to be held on (mm/dd/yyyy)
I affiliate with the party (and I certify that I am now registered on the registration records of the precinct in which I reside as an affiliate of the party).
I pledge that I have been affiliated with that party for at least 90 days as of the date of the filing of the notice of candidacy. I pledge that if I am defeated in the primary, I will not run for the same office as a write-in candidate in the next general election.
☐ I am filing for a non-partisan contest:
I hereby file notice that I am a candidate for election to the office of
(District/Ward) for the governing body of
in the regular election to be held on (mm/dd/yyyy)

Felony disclosure
6 Have you ever been convicted of a felony? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If you have been convicted of a felony, you must complete a Candidate Felony Disclosure form within 48 hours of submitting this notice (G.S.163-106). The required form can be obtained from any election office or from the NC State Board of Elections website at www.NCSBE.gov. A prior felony conviction does not preclude holding elected office if rights of citizenship have been restored (Candidates who are running for Sheriff must have no previous or current felony convictions. If there are any felony convictions, the candidate is not eligible to file for this office.). Felony conviction need not be disclosed if the conviction was dismissed as a result of reversal on appeal or resulted in a pardon of innocence or expungement.

Affidavit attesting to nickname
Complete only if you would like an acceptable nickname to appear on the ballot in lieu of your legal name.
Even if your nickname is accepted, your legal last name will still appear on the ballot.
7 I, , have been duly sworn, hereby state under oath that I have been commonly known by the nickname for at least five years and request that my name be placed on the ballot as follows: .
In the event that another candidate with the same last name as mine files notice of candidacy for the same office for which I am a candidate, my name should be listed as: .
State of North Carolina, County.
I hereby certify that , the candidate who signed this Affidavit attesting to nickname, personally appeared before me this day and signed this document in my presence.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of .
Name of notary
My commission expires (mm/dd/yyyy)
Notary seal
Notary, sign here
X

Acknowledgment of notice of candidacy
This section must be completed by a certifying officer or notary.
See G.S. 163-106(a)
8 Each candidate shall sign the notice of candidacy in the presence of the chairman or secretary of the board of elections, State or county, with which the candidate files. In the alternative, a candidate may have the candidate's signature on the notice of candidacy acknowledged and certified to by an officer authorized to take acknowledgments and administer oaths, in which case the candidate may mail or deliver by commercial courier service the candidate's notice of candidacy to the appropriate board of elections.
State of North Carolina, County.
I hereby certify that , the candidate who signed this notice of candidacy, personally appeared before me this day and signed this document in my presence or acknowledged his/her signature to be the same.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of .
Name of certifying officer or notary
Title of certifying officer
My commission expires (mm/dd/yyyy)
Notary seal
Certifying or notary, sign here
X

County board of elections certification
If you are required to file your notice of candidacy with the State Board of Elections, you must have this certificate signed by the chairman of the board of elections or the director of elections of the county.
See G.S. 163-106.5.
9 I have examined the voter registration records in County, and found that :
☐ is a registered voter in this county
☐ is registered as (indicate candidate's party affiliation or "unaffiliated", if applicable)
☐ will have been affiliated with that party for three months as of the end of the of the filing period
☐ (Superior Court or District Court Judge only) is a resident of superior court district or district court district .
Title of county official Date (mm/dd/yyyy)
Board chair or director of elections, sign here
X

Candidate's certification
Fraudulently or falsely completing this form is a Class I Felony under Chapter 163 of the NC General Statutes.
10 I swear or affirm that the statements on this form are true, correct and complete to the best of my knowledge or belief.
Candidate, sign and date here (Required)
X Date (mm/dd/yyyy)
Sign and date this section in the presence of the certifying or notary from section 8.
Submit this form to the board of elections in the jurisdiction in which you plan to be a candidate.

The notice of candidacy is a public record in the office of the board of elections where the candidate files.

1.2 FILING JURISDICTION, FILING PERIOD, AND FILING FEES

Candidates for the following office types must file their Notice of Candidacy with the State Board of Elections:

- Federal Offices
- Supreme Court Justice and Court of Appeals Judges
- Superior Court Judge
- District Court Judge
- District Attorney

Candidates for offices of State Senator, State House Representative, and all county and local offices must file their notice of candidacy with their county board of elections.

- Filing for contests subject to party nomination begins at noon on **Monday, December 1, 2025,** and ends at noon on **Friday, December 19, 2025**.
- Filing for soil & water conservation supervisors begins at noon on **Monday, June 08, 2026,** and ends at noon on **Thursday, July 2, 2026**.

PLEASE NOTE: *Only the candidate may file the notice of candidacy and pay the filing fee in person at the appropriate board of elections. Alternatively, a candidate may have the candidate's signature on the notice of candidacy acknowledged and certified by an officer authorized to take acknowledgments and administer oaths (e.g., a notary), in which case the candidate may mail or deliver by commercial courier service the candidate's notice of candidacy to the appropriate board of elections. Any candidate filing seeking an office that falls under the jurisdiction of the State Board must first have the Certification of Registration—Section 9 of the Notice of Candidacy form—completed and signed by the county board of elections director within the county that he or she is registered to vote in.*

Filing with the State Board of Elections

- You must pay the filing fee when you file a notice of candidacy. The fee is generally 1% of the office's base salary, payable by cashier's check, money order, personal check, or campaign check. See N.C.G.S § 163-107 for an overview of filing fees. Refer to N.C.G.S. § 163-107.1 to learn about filing a petition in lieu of payment of a filing fee. Visit the State Board's Petitions webpage for more information, https://www.ncsbe.gov/candidates/petitions.

The following offices file with our agency: (note that salary and corresponding filing fee may change between the time of publication of this guide and the filing period)

Office	Salary	Filing Fee
U.S. Senate	$174,000	$1,740.00
U.S. House of Representatives (seats 1-14)	$174,000	$1,740.00
Associate Justice, State Supreme Court (seat 1)	$197,802*	$1,978.02
Judges, State Court of Appeals (seats 1, 2, and 3)	$189,621*	$1,896.21
Judges, Superior Court (several districts/seats)	$169,125*	$1,691.25
Judge, District Court (several districts/seats)	$162,620*	$1,626.20
District Attorneys (several districts)	$167,337*	$1,673.37

Filing with the County Board of Elections

The following offices file with a county board of elections office. Find county board of elections contact information by visiting www.ncsbe.gov/about-elections/county-boards-election
(*note that salary and corresponding filing fee may change between the time of publication of this guide and the filing period)*

Office	Salary	Filing Fee
County Offices such as County Commissioner, Board of Education, etc.	Contact county	Contact county
Soil and Water-candidate filing begins at noon on June 8, 2026, and ends at 5 p.m., on July 6, 2026	Set rate not based on salary	$5
State Representative	$13,951	$139.51
State Senator	$13,951	$139.51

1.3 GENERAL CANDIDACY REQUIREMENTS

Unless otherwise specified, all candidates must be registered to vote in the state, qualified to vote in an election for the office sought, and 21 years old by the date of the general election. The following table lists additional requirements for certain offices.

Office	Additional Requirements
U.S. Senate	Candidates must be at least 30 years of age, a U.S. citizen for at least 9 years, and a resident of the state by the date of the general election.
U.S. House	Candidates must be at least 25 years of age, a U.S. citizen for at least 7 years, and a resident of the state by the date of the general election (a candidate running for U.S. House is not required to be a resident of the congressional district in which the candidate is seeking election).
NC House	Candidates must have resided in the district for one year immediately prior to general election.
NC Senate	Candidates must be at least 25 years of age and have resided in the state as a citizen for two years and in the district for one year prior to the general election.
County and Local	Varies

1.4 ONLY ONE OFFICE PER ELECTION

No person may file for more than one office for any one election. A person who has filed a notice of candidacy may not subsequently file for any other office when the election is on the same date unless the notice for the first office is withdrawn by the deadline.

1.5 CANDIDATE'S NAME ON THE BALLOT

No title, appendage, or appellation indicating rank, status, or position shall be printed on the official ballot in connection with a candidate's name, though candidates may use the title Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. Legitimate nicknames may be permitted on official ballots, but only if listed on the notice of candidacy. The nickname may not mislead voters or unduly advertise the candidacy. If a candidate is providing an affidavit to permit the use of a nickname with his or her legal last name, the affidavit shall include the way the ballot shall list the candidate's name (as permitted by law) in the event that another candidate with the same last name files for the same office.

The table below provides examples of what is and what is not acceptable for the candidate's name on the ballot if the candidate's name is George Eugene Smith.

Candidate Name on Ballots		Candidate Name on Ballot Examples:	
		Allowed	**Not Allowed**
1	A candidate may use either first or middle name before the last name (no nickname affidavit necessary)	George Smith Eugene Smith	
2	A candidate may abbreviate using the first letter of either his first or middle name (but not last name) (no nickname affidavit necessary).	G. Smith G.E. Smith George E. Smith G. Eugene Smith	George S. G.E.S.
3	A candidate may choose to include a suffix (no nickname affidavit necessary)	George Smith George Smith, Jr. George Smith III	George Smith, Esq. George Smith, MD
4	The ONLY title allowed along with a name is Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms.	Mr. George Smith	General George Smith Judge George Smith Hon. George Smith
5	If a nickname affidavit is completed, the nickname must either be used in place of the first or middle name, or following the first or middle name in parentheses. Nicknames that indicate rank, status, or position, are prohibited. Any shortening of a proper name as it appears in the voter record, other than abbreviation to the first letter, requires a nickname affidavit (such as "Dave" if the voter registration lists the first name as "David")	George (Joey)Smith George E. (Joey) Smith George Eugene (Joey) Smith Eugene (Joey) Smith Joey Smith	George (Da Bomb) Smith George (Vote For Me) Smith George (The Judge) Smith George (Winner) Smith
6	**Hyphenated Surname** as listed on the candidate's voter registration record-Unless the candidate's voter registration has been updated, his or her surname to appear on the ballot **must** match the voter registration record.	George Eugene-Smith (how candidate's name appears on the voter registration record)	George Eugene Smith (not allowed unless voter registration has been updated)

1.6 CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE

Each candidate must sign the notice of candidacy in the presence of the chair or secretary of the relevant board of elections. Alternatively, a candidate may have his or her signature on the notice of candidacy acknowledged and certified by a Notary Public, in which case the candidate may mail or have the notice of

candidacy delivered by commercial courier service to the appropriate board of elections before the candidate filing deadline.

In signing the notice of candidacy, the candidate shall either:

use his or her legal name (an initial may be used for a middle name, if applicable), and in the candidate's discretion may also include any nickname by which he or she is commonly known; or

provide a signed affidavit that the candidate has been known by a certain nickname for at least five years prior to the date of the affidavit, in which case he or she may sign with the nickname in lieu of the legal first name and any middle initial or name. A candidate may not use a last name other than his or her legal last name.

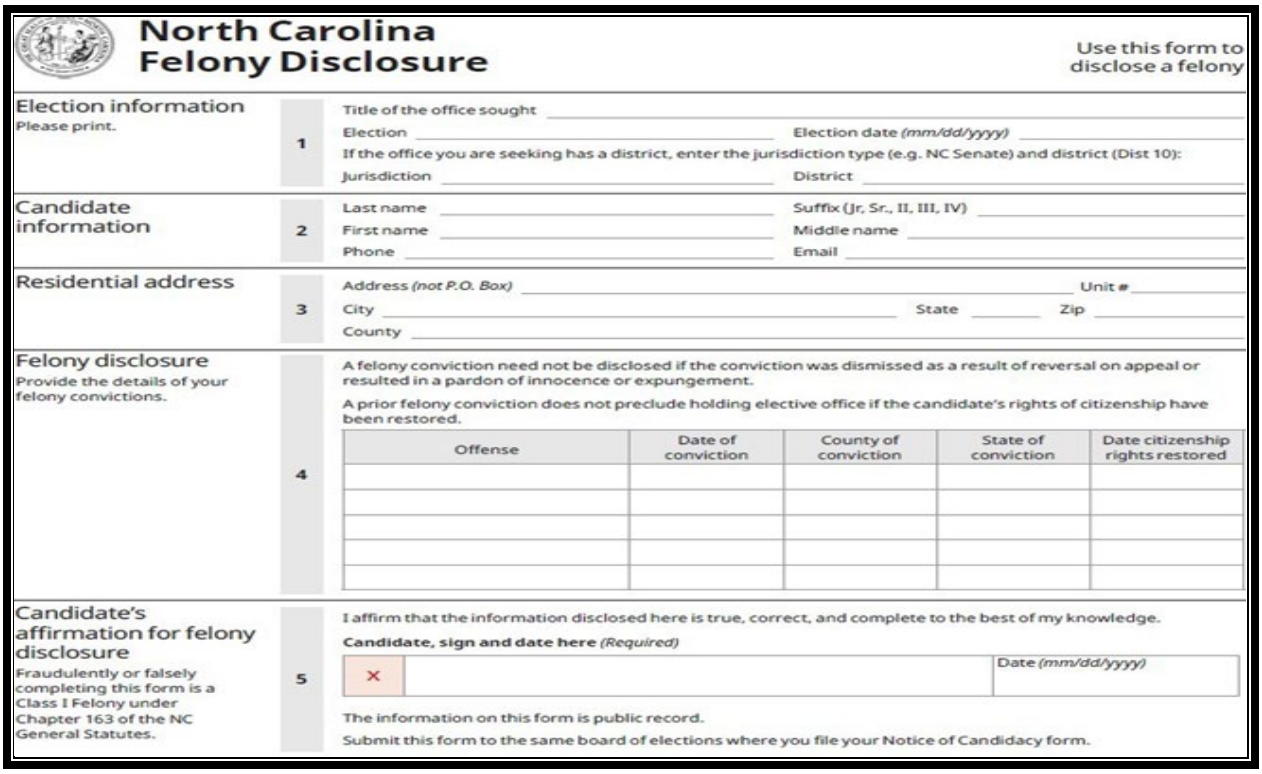
1.7 DISCLOSURE OF FELONY CONVICTION

The *Notice of Candidacy* form provided by the State Board of Elections includes a statement that addresses whether the candidate has ever been convicted of a felony. Candidates are required by law to file a statement that answers the following question: "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" Candidates who answer "yes" to this question must provide the name of the offense, date of conviction, date of restoration of citizenship rights, and the county and state of conviction. Candidates must complete the Felony Disclosure Form, available on the State Board of Elections' website (NCSBE.gov), for this purpose. It is a Class I felony for an individual to knowingly provide untrue information in response to this question.

A candidate is not required to disclose a felony conviction if the conviction was dismissed as a result of reversal on appeal or resulted in a pardon of innocence or expungement. A prior felony conviction does not preclude holding elective office if the candidate's rights of citizenship have been restored.

If a candidate fails to answer the felony question, the board of elections that accepted the filing will notify the candidate of the omission, at which point the candidate has **48 hours** to answer the felony conviction question. If a candidate does not provide this information at the time of filing or within 48 hours after the notice, the individual's filing is not considered complete, the individual's name shall not appear on the ballot as a candidate, and votes for the individual shall not be counted. It is a Class I felony to complete the felony disclosure knowing that information as to a felony conviction or the restoration of citizenship is untrue.

Refer to the North Carolina Felony Disclosure Form below, except for the sheriff contest.



North Carolina
Felony Disclosure

Use this form to disclose a felony

Election information
Please print.

1
Title of the office sought _____
Election _____ Election date *(mm/dd/yyyy)* _____
If the office you are seeking has a district, enter the jurisdiction type (e.g. NC Senate) and district (Dist 10):
Jurisdiction _____ District _____

Candidate information

2
Last name _____ Suffix (Jr, Sr., II, III, IV) _____
First name _____ Middle name _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Residential address

3
Address *(not P.O. Box)* _____ Unit # _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
County _____

Felony disclosure
Provide the details of your felony convictions.

4
A felony conviction need not be disclosed if the conviction was dismissed as a result of reversal on appeal or resulted in a pardon of innocence or expungement.
A prior felony conviction does not preclude holding elective office if the candidate's rights of citizenship have been restored.

Offense	Date of conviction	County of conviction	State of conviction	Date citizenship rights restored

Candidate's affirmation for felony disclosure
Fraudulently or falsely completing this form is a Class I Felony under Chapter 163 of the NC General Statutes.

5
I affirm that the information disclosed here is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge.
Candidate, sign and date here *(Required)*
× _____ Date *(mm/dd/yyyy)*
The information on this form is public record.
Submit this form to the same board of elections where you file your Notice of Candidacy form.

1.8 WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDACY

A person who has filed a notice of candidacy for an even-year party nomination has the right to withdraw it at any time prior to the close of business on the third business day prior to the date on which the right to file for that office expires and receive a refund of their filing fee. No general election candidate in a partisan contest may withdraw on or after the first day absentee ballots are distributed for the election.

North Carolina
Withdrawal of Notice of Candidacy

Use this form to withdraw your Notice of Candidacy

Election information
Please print.

1
Title of the office sought _____
Election _____ Election date *(mm/dd/yyyy)* _____

Candidate information
Use the same information that you used to complete your notice of candidacy.

2
Last name _____ Suffix (Jr, Sr., II, III, IV) _____
First name _____ Middle name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
County _____
Phone number _____ Email _____

Candidate's affirmation for withdrawal of candidacy
Fraudulently or falsely completing this form is a Class I felony under Chapter 163 of the NC General Statutes.

3
A person who has filed a notice of candidacy for an **even-year party nomination** has the right to withdraw it at any time prior to the close of business on the third business day prior to the date on which the right to file for that office expires and receive a refund of their filing fee.

A person who has filed a notice of candidacy for a **municipal office** may withdraw their candidacy at any time, but will only receive a refund of the candidate's filing fee if the withdrawal is prior to the close of business on the third business day on which the right to file for that office expires.

No general election candidate in a partisan contest may withdraw on or after the first day absentee ballots are distributed for the election.

I hereby affirm that I have filed as a candidate for office and I am withdrawing my notice of candidacy.
Candidate, sign and date here *(Required)*
× _____ Date *(mm/dd/yyyy)*
Submit this form to the office where you filed. Find the contact information for your local board of elections at the NCSBE website (vt.ncsbe.gov/BOEInfo).

Please note: Withdrawal of your notice of candidacy does not close your candidate committee. Your treasurer must continue to file disclosure reports until your committee is eligible to close under 08 NCAC 21 .0202 or to obtain inactive status under N.C.G.S. § 163-278.10.

1.9 PARTY AFFILIATION

No one is permitted to file as a candidate in a party primary unless he or she has been affiliated with that party for at least 90 days as of the date of that person's filing of notice of candidacy. A person registered as "unaffiliated" is ineligible to file as a candidate in a partisan primary election.

1.10 VERIFICATION BY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Candidates required to file their notice of candidacy with the State Board must file, along with their notice, a certificate of registration signed by the chair of the board of elections or the director of elections of the county in which they are registered to vote. For this reason, candidates required to file their notice of candidacy with the State Board must first visit their local county board of elections prior to submitting the notice to the State Board. This certificate serves to verify that the person filing for candidacy is registered to vote in that county and that they have continuously affiliated with the party whose nomination the candidate seeks for the three-month period before the close of the candidate filing period.

1.11 CANDIDATE CHALLENGES AND ELECTION PROTESTS

CHALLENGES: WHEN, HOW, AND GROUNDS FOR A CHALLENGE

A challenge to a candidate must be filed with the board of elections that received the notice of candidacy or petition no later than ten business days after the close of the filing period. The challenge must be made in a verified affidavit by a challenger, based on the challenger's reasonable suspicion or belief of the facts stated. The grounds for filing a challenge are that the candidate does not meet the constitutional or statutory qualifications for the office, including residency.

Visit the State Board's website for more information about candidate challenges: https://www.ncsbe.gov/candidates/candidatechallenges.

1.12 ELECTION PROTEST

If a challenger discovers grounds for challenging a candidate after the deadline, those grounds may be the basis for an "election protest." Only registered voters are eligible to participate in the election in question and candidates in the election in question are permitted to protest the election.

The timing for filing a protest depends on the nature of the alleged irregularity. A county board shall not delay the canvass of a contest for election protests that do not relate to the counting or tabulating of votes.

Alleged Irregularity	Filing Deadline
Manner in which votes were counted or results tabulated	Before the beginning of the county canvass meeting
Manner in which votes were counted or results tabulated AND protest states good cause for delay in filing	5 PM on the 2nd business day after the county has completed canvass and declared results
Irregularity other than vote counting or results tabulation	5 PM on the 2nd business day after the county has completed its canvass and declared results

If the protest is filed before Election Day and concerns an irregularity other than vote counting or results tabulation, the protest proceedings shall be stayed until after Election Day (unless a party defending against the protest moves otherwise) if any one of the following conditions exists:

- The ballot has been printed
- The voter registration deadline for that election has passed
- Any of the proceedings will occur within 30 days before Election Day

Persons who wish to file a protest shall use the form prescribed by the State Board of Elections (08 NCAC 02 .0111). See the State Board's website for additional information: https://www.ncsbe.gov/about-elections/legal-resources/challenge-protest-appeal-and-complaint-forms.

2 VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES

Voter registration is fundamental to elections. Assisting qualified citizens in becoming registered voters and involving them in the democratic process is a worthy cause and carries with it certain responsibilities. Candidates and their campaigns *may* distribute voter registration applications and conduct voter registration drives. Voter registration applications may be picked up in county boards of elections offices in quantities up to 100. Larger quantities may be requested from the State Board. Anyone conducting a voter registration drive must adhere to the following guidelines:

- You must provide individuals with current, state-approved voter registration forms. These forms may be ordered from the State Board of Elections (if quantities are over 100) by filling out and signing a NC Voter Registration Supplies Order Form and faxing it to the number on the form or picked up from county boards of elections' offices (if quantities are below 100).
- You must refrain from coercing, threatening, or intimidating any person engaged in the registration or voting process.
- You should encourage individuals to complete the entire form. You are not permitted to change any information placed on the form without the permission of the person registering. To do so is a Class 2 misdemeanor.
- If assisting a person in filling out a voter registration form, you must place information on the form that accurately reflects the intent and direction of the person.
- You must not offer a person a voter registration form that has a party affiliation premarked unless the person receiving the form has requested the premarking. To do so is a Class 2 misdemeanor.
- A person may not be compensated based on the number of forms submitted for assisting people in registering to vote. To do so is a Class 2 misdemeanor.
- **You are strongly encouraged to submit completed voter registration forms and any accompanying documentation to the county board of elections in the county in which the applicant resides within 5 business days of receiving the forms. You must return the forms, so they are received no later than the 25th day before an election. Failure to do so is a Class 2 misdemeanor.**

Applications received by the State Board of Elections will be routed to the proper county board of elections, but voter registration drive organizers are strongly encouraged to route completed applications directly to applicants' proper county board of elections to ensure timely processing.

2.1 CAPTURING VOTERS' PERSONAL IDENTIFYING INFORMATION IS UNLAWFUL

No person may retain a voter's full or partial social security number, date of birth, electronic mail address, photocopies of identification for voting, or driver's license number when that information is generated in the voter registration process. This information is confidential.

Further, it is a misdemeanor for any person who is not an election official, or who is not otherwise authorized by law, to retain a registrant's signature, full or partial Social Security number, date of birth, or the identity of the

public agency at which the registrant registered to vote, or any electronic mail address, or driver license number from any form after submission of the form to the county board of elections or elections official.

2.2 VOTER CHALLENGES

A voter challenge is the legal process to contest a person's eligibility to register and/or vote. In the absence of affirmative proof, the presumption is that a voter is properly registered or affiliated. Each challenge must be made separately, in writing, under oath, and on the Voter Challenge Form. The challenger must be a registered voter in the county and must show that he or she knows, suspects, or reasonably believes the voter is not qualified or entitled to vote and must attach any evidence to support the challenge. A challenge may only be filed for the reasons listed in statute. Any other reason is not grounds for a challenge. The challenge process is set out in Article 8 of Chapter 163.

A challenge to a voter's right to register, remain registered, or vote must be filed with the county board of elections before the 25th day before the primary, general, or special election, and the challenge will be resolved before election day. A challenge can also be made during early voting or on Election Day by filing a challenge at the voting site at the time the registered voter offers to vote.

The absentee ballot of any voter received by the county board of elections pursuant to G.S. 163-231(b) (1) may be challenged no later than 5:00 p.m. on the fifth business day after the primary, general election, or county bond election. The absentee ballot of any voter received by the county board of elections pursuant G.S. 163-231(b)(2) may be challenged no later than 5:00 p.m. on the next business day following the deadline for receipt of such absentee ballots.

More information about voter challenges, including what a challenge can and cannot be based on, can be read in the Voter Challenge Procedures Guide on the State Board's website at: https://www.ncsbe.gov/about-elections/legal-resources/challenge-protest-appeal-and-complaint-forms.

3 VOTING IN NORTH CAROLINA

Candidates should be aware of the options for voting in North Carolina.

3.1 VOTING METHODS

There are four methods by which a registered voter may cast a ballot in North Carolina:

Absentee By-Mail

Absentee by-mail voting permits any registered voter to request, receive, and return a ballot by mail. Military voters, civilians out of the country, and visually-impaired voters may also vote absentee using the State Board's Absentee Ballot Portal (https://votebymail.ncsbe.gov/app/home). Absentee ballots for a primary must be available 50 days before election day. If a second primary is necessary, absentee ballots will be available as soon as practicable. Absentee ballots for a general election must be available 60 days before election day.

Early Voting

Early Voting permits a person to request a ballot in person, receive the ballot, and cast the ballot at any early voting site in the county. The early voting period begins on the third Thursday prior to the date of an election and ends on the last Saturday before Election Day.

Election Day

The hours for voting on Election Day are 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Any voter who is in line at 7:30 p.m. will be allowed to vote. On Election Day, registered voters should vote in their assigned precincts to receive the correct ballot style. A voter's precinct is assigned according to the address where the voter has resided for 30 or more days prior to the date of an election. Voters who present to vote at a polling site other than their assigned precinct should be directed to their proper precinct or be offered a provisional ballot. The county board of elections will review all provisional applications and use current North Carolina laws to determine whether to count part or all of the ballot.

Provisional Voting

Provisional Voting is a process where voters whose eligibility to vote cannot be immediately determined are allowed to vote a ballot that is sealed inside an envelope. County Board of Elections staff then research the voter's information to determine their eligibility. The county board then determines whether to count part or all of the ballot based on that research.

3.2 VOTER ASSISTANCE

Any voter is entitled to assistance from the voter's near relatives, which state law defines as the voter's spouse, brother, sister, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, stepparent, or stepchild, as chosen by the voter. The voter need not be disabled to receive such assistance.

A voter in any of the following categories is entitled to assistance from a person of the voter's choice, excluding the voter's employer or agent of that employer or an officer or agent of the voter's union:

- A voter who, due to physical disability, is unable to enter the voting booth without assistance.
- A voter who, due to physical disability, is unable to mark a ballot without assistance.
- A voter who, due to illiteracy, is unable to mark a ballot without assistance.
- A voter who, due to blindness, is unable to enter the voting booth or mark a ballot without assistance.

There is no prohibition against a candidate assisting a voter if the voter is entitled to assistance. A person assisting a voter will be required to complete a voter assistance log.

See https://www.ncsbe.gov/about-elections/legal-resources/numbered-memos and click Numbered Memo 2016-16 for additional information about voter assistance.

4 ELECTION RESULTS

All election results on election night are unofficial. Election results are not made official until all relevant canvasses are completed (the county canvass for local contests and the state canvass for multicounty or statewide contests).

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Absentee ballots are counted at 5:00 PM on Election Day. In some cases, they may be counted as early as 2:00 PM. County boards of elections will not release absentee results until after the close of the polls.

Absentee ballots that are timely cured after election day, and absentee ballots from military and overseas voters that are timely mailed before election day and timely received *after* election day, will be counted prior to the county's canvass meeting.

EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION DAY BALLOTS

Ballots cast during early voting and ballots cast on election day are counted after the close of the polls on election day. Polls close at 7:30 PM.

PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

Provisional ballots are researched after Election Day. If the provisional voter is determined to be eligible, his or her ballot will be counted prior to the county's canvass meeting on the third day after election day.

4.1 COUNTY CANVASS

The county canvass meeting is the meeting that culminates in a county's election results becoming official. The county canvass meeting is conducted 10 days after Election Day (except for September and October odd-year municipal elections). Until the county canvass, all election results posted by the county or by the State Board of Elections are unofficial.

These are the specific dates for the 2026 county canvass meetings:

Election Event	County Canvass
March Primary Election	March 13, 2026, at 11 a.m.
November General Election	November 13, 2026, at 11 a.m.

4.2 STATE CANVASS

National offices, multi-county legislative offices, judicial offices, district attorney, and statewide and multi-county referenda contests must be canvassed by the State Board. Municipal offices that are in more than one county are not canvassed by the State Board, but the State Board provides the county board in each county in which the municipality is located with a composite abstract of the results. All contests are authenticated by the State Board. The date for the state canvass of any primary or second primary will be set by the State Board closer to the time of the election event. The date of the state canvass for the November general election is **Tuesday, November 24, 2026,** at 11:00 a.m.

5 CAMPAIGN ETIQUETTE

5.1 NO ELECTIONEERING NEAR THE FRONT ENTRANCE TO A VOTING SITE

No electioneering may occur within the area immediately outside of the front entrance of a voting place. This area will be marked by signage to designate the area of the "buffer zone," which is typically 50 feet from the front entrance, but in any case, must be at least 25 feet from the front entrance. Persons may not engage in electioneering in this restricted area. If a political sign is placed in this restricted area, it will be removed. For more information about the area in which electioneering is restricted for a specific voting site, please contact your county board of elections office.

5.2 CURBSIDE VOTING

Every voting site will offer curbside voting in a designated area, to allow voters with disabilities that prevent them from entering the voting site to cast their vote in a vehicle. If curbside voting is located outside of the "buffer zone," electioneering restrictions will be in place to ensure the privacy of curbside voters when they are voting.

Curbside Voters must sign the following affidavit to receive a ballot curbside:

"Do you swear (or affirm) that you are a registered voter in County and precinct. That because of age or physical disability, you are unable to enter the voting place to vote in person without physical assistance. That you desire to vote outside the voting place and enclosure, and that you understand that a false statement as to your condition will be in violation of North Carolina law."

5.3 ISSUES OR COMPLAINTS AT VOTING SITES

Any issue or complaint relating to a voting site should first be brought to the attention of the polling place's chief judge. If the issue cannot be resolved by the election official at the voting site, the relevant county board of elections office should be contacted.

6 Voter Photo ID

In-Person Voters

Voters must show an acceptable photo ID when they check in at their voting site during early voting or on Election Day. Election workers check to see if the picture on the ID reasonably resembles the voter and if the name on the ID is the same as or very similar to the voter's name in their registration record. The address on the photo ID does not have to match the voter registration records.

If the voter does not show an acceptable ID, the voter may proceed to vote in one of the two following ways:

1. complete an ID Exception Form and then vote with a provisional ballot, *or*
2. vote with a provisional ballot and then return to their county board of elections office with their photo ID by noon three days after Election Day.

Absentee-By-Mail Voters

Voters who vote by mail must include a photocopy of an acceptable ID when returning their ballot, or they may complete an ID Exception Form. The voter places the photocopy of ID or ID Exception Form in a pocket on the outside of the ballot container envelope, which is then placed in an outer return envelope to protect the privacy of the voter. Military and overseas voters must comply with the photo ID requirement to have their votes counted in state and local contests.

Acceptable Photo IDs for Voting

For more information about the photo ID requirement, including what photo IDs are acceptable for voting, go to https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/voter-id

Candidacy Forms

Form Name	Description of the Form
General Notice of Candidacy Form	This form is used to place a candidate's name on the ballot for a primary and general election.
Felony Disclosure Form	The Felony Disclosure Form must be completed if a candidate has previously been convicted of a felony, unless the conviction was dismissed as a result in a pardon of innocence or expungement.
Felony Disclosure Statement (for Sheriff candidates only)	Pursuant to NC G.S. 163-106(f) candidates for sheriff must complete several forms and a disclosure statement verifying that they have had no prior felony convictions or expungements.
Withdrawal of the Notice of Candidacy Form	The Withdrawal of Notice of Candidacy can be used for a candidate who wishes to withdraw his or his notice of candidacy. Any person has the right to withdraw at any time prior to the close of the business day prior to the date on which the right to file for that office expires under the terms of G.S. § 163-106.2.
Notice of Candidacy via Petition	The Notice of Candidacy via Petition is used when a petitioner candidate has received the required number of signatures set forth by the North Carolina General Statutes and the petition has been certified by either the State Board of Elections or the county board of elections.
Candidate Challenge Form	It is recommended that the challenger use this form to ensure they provide all necessary information. The form is not required, as the statute provides that the challenge be made on an "affidavit".
Candidate Challenge Appeal Form	Used to file an appeal of a hearing panel's decision on a challenge to a candidate's candidacy.