

# How to Become a Candidate for a County Office

## An Informational Guide For Prospective Candidates



Compliments of:

*Okeechobee County*

Supervisor of Elections

Diane Hagan

**R**unning for political office can be a very exciting and rewarding time for an individual and I want to make it as easy as possible for you by making sure you are well informed about laws and issues surrounding your candidacy. This brochure provides you with some preliminary information to consider before deciding whether or not to pursue an elected office. If you do decide to move forward you will need to set up an appointment with me at which time I will answer any questions that you have and give you a more detailed candidate handbook.

*Diane*

Diane Hagan  
Supervisor of Elections

### First Things First

Very Important! You must file Form DS-DE 9, *Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository for Candidates*, with the Supervisor of Elections before you do any of the following:

- ★ Collect any money toward your candidacy
- ★ Spend any money toward your candidacy
- ★ Collect signatures on petitions
- ★ Open a bank account

Within ten (10) days of filling the DS-DE 9, you must also file with the Supervisor of Elections Form DS-DE 84, *Statement of Candidate*, on which you affirm that you have been provided access to read, and understand the requirements of Chapter 106, Florida Statutes which covers campaign finance laws.

### Qualifying

Anyone who seeks to qualify for an office must do one of the following:

- ★ Pay the Qualifying Fee
- ★ Complete the Petition Process
- ★ Write-In Candidate

Qualifying Fees: Qualifying fees must be paid by campaign account check. The qualifying fee for partisan candidates is 6% of the annual salary of the office being sought. The qualifying fee for nonpartisan candidates is 4% of that annual salary. Checks are to be made payable to the Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections. Candidates for school board must run as nonpartisan.

Petition Process: Candidates must obtain valid petition signatures from 1% of the registered voters in the county who were qualified to vote in the last General Election. The format of the petition is prescribed by the Division of Elections and thus Form DS-DE 104 shall be used by candidates to reproduce petitions for circulation. Signatures for a county office may be collected from any Okeechobee County resident who is currently registered to vote in the county regardless of party affiliation, precinct or district. All petition signatures must be verified by the Supervisor of Elections office at a cost to the candidate of 10 cents per signature checked.

**Remember, before collecting any petition signatures, the candidate must file Form DS-DE 9, *Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository* with the Supervisor of Elections office.**

The deadlines for submitting petitions to the Supervisor of Elections office to qualify for the 2020 Elections are as follows:

Noon, March 23, 2020  
Federal & Judicial Candidates

Noon, May 11, 2020  
State & Local Candidates

Once the county candidate has obtained the required number of valid certified signatures (206 required), the Supervisor of Elections office will provide certification that the candidate has obtained the signatures necessary to qualify by the petition process.

Write-In Candidate: Files the same qualifying papers, pays no filing or assessment fees but is not entitled to have his/her name appear on the printed ballot.

The 2020 qualifying dates are as follows:

Noon, April 20 – April 24, 2020  
Federal & Judicial Candidates

Noon, June 8 – June 12, 2020  
Statewide, Multi-County, County & District  
Candidates

## Campaign Advertising

There are very specific State and Local laws that govern campaign advertising. We urge you to become familiar with these laws as they pertain to political disclaimers that must



appear on signs, advertisements, mail outs, and other campaign items, as well as where you may and may not place your campaign signs.

## Reporting Requirements

Once you file Form DS-DE 9, *Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository for Candidate*, you are required to begin filing regular campaign finance reports with the Supervisor of Elections office. A schedule of reporting dates will be provided upon declaring your candidacy.

Campaign finance reports must be submitted electronically using the web-based reporting tool provided by the Supervisor of Elections office at no charge to the candidate. Even if you have no activity in your campaign account for a certain reporting period, you must file a "Waiver of Report."



Reports shall be electronically filed no later than 11:59 P.M. on the date it is due. We encourage early submission in case corrections are needed. Late filing fees can be quite costly and must be paid out of your personal funds. If you have questions about your campaign finance reports, please contact the Supervisor of Elections office before you file it with this office.

Termination reports must be submitted to the Supervisor of Elections by all candidates within 90 days of a candidate becoming unopposed, withdrawing his/her candidacy, being eliminated, or elected to office.

## 2020 Election Schedule

### Local Candidates

#### Primary Election

|                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Registration Closes | July 20, 2020     |
| Early Vote          | August 3-15, 2020 |
| Primary Election    | August 18, 2020   |

#### General Election

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Registration Closes | October 5, 2020     |
| Early Vote          | October 19-31, 2020 |
| General Election    | November 3, 2020    |

(Dates contained herein are subject to change without notice)

## Resources

### Florida Division of Elections

Email: [divelections@dos.state.fl.us](mailto:divelections@dos.state.fl.us)  
Website: [election.dos.state.fl.us](http://election.dos.state.fl.us)  
Phone: 850-245-6200  
Fax: 850-245-6217

### Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections

Email: [elections@voteokeechobee.com](mailto:elections@voteokeechobee.com)  
Website: [voteokeechobee.com](http://voteokeechobee.com)  
Phone: 863-763-4014  
Fax: 863-763-0152

#### Note to City Council Candidates:

All questions regarding candidacy for City Council should be directed to City Clerk Lane Gamiotea, City Hall, 863-763-3372

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Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections  
304 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> St, Room 144, Okeechobee, FL 34972